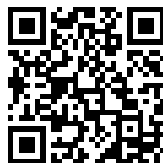
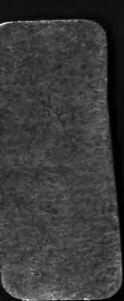

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A Bible . Old Test. Psalms

THE GOLDEN DIARY

OF HEART CONVERSE WITH JESUS
IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS

BY THE

REV. DR. EDERSHEIM

TORQUAY

Arranged for every Sunday in the Year

LONDON

JAMES NISBET & CO. 21 BERNERS STREET, W.

1866.

O David, how hast thou sung all too little for pious souls !

GREGORY OF NAZIANZUM.

He only understands the words of David who suffers as David.

AMBROSE.

Never shalt thou comprehend David, till in thine own experience thou hast attained the feelings of the Psalms.—BERNARD.

Many things doth the Spirit reserve, that He may ever have us for His disciples ; many He only shows in order to allure ; many He gives to affect and influence ; and (as S. Augustine has so well said) if man has never so spoken as to be understood by all and in all things, much more has the Holy Spirit alone intelligence of all His own words.—LUTHER.



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Erratum.—In pp. 43, 58, and 85, for *STADIUM* read *STUDIIUM*.

PREFACE.

THE main object for which these Meditations were originally written down, was practically to exhibit a mode of reading the Scriptures, and especially the Book of Psalms, which has been found most useful and precious by many of God's people. This consists in turning them, verse by verse, and almost clause by clause, into spiritual food, by making them subject of devout meditation and object of believing prayer. It is wonderful how, when thus musing, the fire burns within us, and our words of prayer flow apace. Our desires are drawn out, our faith, hope, and love are quickened and exercised, our prayers cease to be vague, and become special and earnest, and the Scriptures are opened up to us. The Holy Spirit shines upon His own Word and into our hearts. In this respect, I may venture to say that some of the most blessed hours of the writer have been spent over these pages, and if in their perusal the reader derive, in any measure, the

spiritual refreshing experienced in writing them, their chief purpose will have been served.

When requested by Christian brethren—some of them personally unknown to me—to gather these Meditations into a volume, I felt it necessary carefully to consult the Hebrew text, and to add a sort of commentary to what originally were only *meditations*. In so doing, I have also availed myself of the best modern commentaries, such as those of Hengstenberg and Delitzsch. Written in the leisure hours of a more than usually busy ministry, and under peculiar personal circumstances, I am only too painfully conscious of shortcomings, both in the substance and in the form of this small volume. I know that what of the manna is not used for daily supply, should be laid up in golden pots before the Lord.

I have arranged the book into fifty-two Meditations, adapted for each Lord's Day, not merely because it is not intended to read them continuously through, but because the subject is, so to speak, specially identified with the risen Saviour. For the truth lying at the foundation of the Psalms, and which makes them the Hymnal of the Church, is *the identification of Christ with the Church*. All the sorrows of the believer run up into the sorrow of Christ; and

all the joys of the believer flow from the joy of Christ. And around these three truths—helpless misery, glorious salvation, and faith, with its exponent, prayer—move all the Psalms. Any seeming repetitions may therefore in part perhaps be due to the constant recurrence of these three elements throughout the Psalms.

Had the volume been suitable for it, I would fain have inscribed it, such as it is, to those loved friends to whom it is my privilege to minister in the gospel of His Son. Any mark of affection, however slender, to those who are themselves so earnest and loving, would have been peculiarly grateful. And now I would send it forth with the earnest prayer that the Lord the Spirit, who indited the Psalms, would give us all increasingly the spiritual understanding and the spiritual joy of them in Christ; and so bless the effort to open this alabaster-box, that the savour of *His* name may be as ointment poured forth.

ALFRED EDERSHEIM.

THE MANSE, TORQUAY,
December 25, 1865.

O GOD, by whom the seed is given ;
By whom the harvest blest ;
Whose Word, the truth sent down from heaven,
Is planted in our breast ;
Preserve it from the passing feet,
And plunderers of the air ;
The sultry sun's intenser heat,
And weeds of worldly care !
Though buried deep or thinly strown,
Do Thou Thy grace supply ;
The hope in earthly furrows sown,
Shall ripen in the sky.

BISHOP HEBER.

I.

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

- 1 BLESSED is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful :
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord ; and in his law doth he meditate
day and night.
- 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
That bringeth forth his fruit in his season :
His leaf also shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.
- 4 The ungodly are not so : but are like the chaff which the wind driveth
away.
- 5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
- 6 For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous : but the way of the
ungodly shall perish.—PSALM I.

A MOST suitable prologue this to the songs of Zion. For *they* are the dwellers in Zion, members of the congregation of the righteous, and of the true Church, who, having through grace received the new law into their hearts, bring forth fruit unto eternal life. Accordingly, the Book of Psalms, which even in its fivefold division corresponds to the Pentateuch (Ps. i.-xlii. ; xlii.-lxxiii. ; lxxiii.-xc. ; xc.-cvii. ; cvii.-cl.), presents the experience—the faith, hope, and love—of those who, having been made members of Christ's Church, 'delight in the law of God after the inward man.' Hence, also, the Psalms

are the hymnal of the Church to Him who brought us out of darkness into His marvellous light. They correspond to, and are the embodiment in song of, the 'Beatitudes,' with which our Lord commenced His teaching of the *new law*—and like that law they open with an emphatic 'Beatitude.'

Truly this Psalm is of Christ, the second Adam, and of all His people. It alike discloses the secret of all real happiness and explains the cause of all felt misery. True happiness must be sought, and comes, from above. On the other hand, all misery springs from and has its being in sin. For consider, what could harm us were it not for the prevalence of sin, or else for our inability to realize God as our Father in Christ? It were not in pain, nor in bereavement, nor in poverty, nor in calumny, nor in persecution, nor in desertion, to make us really unhappy, if all the time our hearts were set on God, and we retained an absolute and childlike trust in Him. Nay, in *all* these things we should be more than conquerors through Him that loved us, could we but cherish unbroken confidence in Him. And this holds true not only of our future victory, but of our present peace. It is not the burden which weighs us down; it is when we have to bear it alone, and *so long* as we bear it alone. The fire of the furnace, though heated seven times, could not scorch the three children while the Son of Man was with them. The pang shoots to the heart while we feel not *His* hand in the stroke; sickness and distress are sore so long as we hear not His voice, and the light of His countenance is withdrawn. Therefore the secret of joy, at all times, is the presence of Christ; and it still holds absolutely true of all men and

under all circumstances: '*Blessed* is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.'

It deserves notice that the characteristics of God's people are first treated *negatively*, as if to indicate the proneness of our natural hearts. For, as Luther has it, on reading this let us not apply it to others, to Jews or to heathens, but think of ourselves. At the very outset, also, let us remember that there is indeed a great difference between happiness in the common and in the scriptural sense. The former is of the earth, earthy; the latter is 'from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' Our happiness is *blessedness*; it comes down to us from heaven. Even our earthly happiness, to be real, must come to us from God. What matters it about our particular rivulet, so long as the spring itself is open and flowing to us? Then, let us ever see to it that all our happiness be blessedness, and it will prove both true and lasting. The best portraiture of the child of God is that which presents his state of heart and mind as one of 'delight in the law of Jehovah,' and his life-engagement as meditation (literally, still, silent meditation) upon it 'day and night' (ver. 2). So to rejoice in His Word, and to feed upon it, is vastly different from merely intellectual study. Then His Word and Spirit prove to us 'rivers of water'—many rivers, yet issuing from one spring, the love of God in Christ, keeping our leaf, the life of faith, ever fresh upon us, and causing us to bring forth 'fruit unto holiness,' 'the fruit of the Spirit in all goodness and righteousness and truth.' There is never disappointment here; no fig-tree like

that which Jesus cursed ; but gladsome it stands by the sweet murmuring of those rivers, in all the beauty of holiness and in all the riches of goodness. 'In his season' you look not in vain for refreshing fruit, for we have not received the grace of God in vain. Yet all this holiness and happiness not in ourselves but in Christ, and as branches of the Vine. In close union with Him lies the secret of our life and of our blessedness. And here also is the road to spiritual success. For, watered by His grace, and in the strength of His might, whatever our calling may be, we prosper, in the scriptural sense of the term. Truly 'in Him we live, and move, and have our being.' I never can be lonely with God ; I never can be poor with God ; I never can be desponding with God ; I never can be bereaved with God. Introduce the spiritual element, give me the blessed sense of His presence, and all is right. I am unhappy *until* I emerge into His presence ; weak *until* I grasp His arm. After that I know neither want nor difficulty. 'Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.' I oftentimes wonder at others, still oftener at myself, when I consider these things. 'O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?' 'Are you so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?' The children of God pierce themselves with many sorrows when they walk 'in the counsel of the ungodly,'—consulting flesh and blood, and sense and sight ; or when they 'stand in the way of sinners,'—associating themselves with their habits, pursuits, ideas, and pleasures ; or when they 'sit in the seat of the

scornful,'—taking up their language, maxims, and practical atheism. The mode of securing permanent happiness is to delight ourselves in the law of Jehovah—in the twofold sense of having this spiritual object and cherishing a spiritual apprehension of it.

This, then, is God's *panacea* for the ills of life ; and this is the victory over the world, even our faith. Faith removes not trials nor afflictions, but gives us a higher and truer delight in the constant realization of Jehovah, as presented in His Word. We can not only wait patiently and endure affliction, but we learn, in our nearness to Christ, and in our sense of being shut up to Him, the truth of this experience : 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart, *more* than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.' The sunlight dispels the thickest darkness, and clears away the most threatening clouds. Then, when patience has had her perfect work, will it also be found literally true : 'Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.' 'For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love,' and He graciously owns the faith which Himself hath implanted. The end of that man is perfect peace ; 'for Jehovah *knoweth* the way of the righteous,'—of those whom He hath chosen, called, justified, and sanctified. This *knowledge* is, as ancient divines express it, '*cum affectu et effectu.*' For He prepareth their way, which indeed is His way, and watcheth over them, and giveth His angels charge by the way. 'He keepeth all his bones : not one of them is broken.' 'They go from strength to strength ; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.'

Though the children of God need not the example and

end of the wicked in order to keep them true to their vows, it is well to note the contrast, to take the warning, and to adore the eternal holiness and justice of our God (vers. 4, 5, 6). Mark the sad classification of sin: 'The ungodly,' who seek their joy in wild tumultuousness (the root of the Hebrew word pointing to the latter); 'sinners,' who go astray, or (literally) miss the mark; and 'the scornful,' whose history, alas! is as old as revelation itself (as old writers express it: *impii corde, peccatores opere, illusores ore*). This is closely followed by corresponding judgment, commencing often even here, but fully manifested in the day when He shall appear with His 'fan in His hand, and will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner, but burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' Yet our motive is not fear, but the constraining love of Christ, which, blessed be God, has cast out our slavish and guilty fears.

1. This Psalm holds perfectly true only in its application to 'the Apostle and High Priest of our profession,' who said, 'I *delight* to do Thy will, O my God: Thy law is within my heart.' Yet must this ever be my *ideal*—that for which my soul longs and seeks. If thou hast discovered the secret of happiness,—that for which the world vainly seeks in so many perverse ways, which only end in disappointment and destruction,—if thou hast found the pearl of great price, well mayest thou sell all thou hast to possess it. How precious is Christ! 'Thou art my portion, O Lord;' 'Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.' 'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.' Ever let me hold fast by Christ; let me seek happiness in blessed-

ness. 'When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.' I have seen and felt much misery, but never real misery allied with faith. Then, straight to Christ; and, when the streams are cut off, all the more ardently repair to the fountain itself.

2. Mark, my soul, the contrast; and while thou ascribest all the praise to sovereign grace, learn from this very fact the solidity and strength of thy hope. *Thou*—through grace—a tree, a palm-tree whose roots are watered by the river of life, whose fruit never faileth, each in its own season, and whose leaf never fadeth,—nay, thou and all thou doest must ever prosper. *They*, by nature like thyself, but having in vain received the sunshine of His word and the rain of His near promise,—at last, like empty chaff driven before the autumn wind, unsanctified here ('chaff,' 'sinners') and unglorified hereafter ('which the wind driveth away,' 'ungodly in the judgment'). If by grace such blessings have been freely extended to me, let me beware how I associate myself with the world. 'O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!'

3. In all my wanderings and musings let me bear in mind the *special* Providence which watcheth over the people of God. 'Jehovah *knoweth* the way of the righteous.' Let me not concern myself about, nor be enticed into, the way of the ungodly, which 'shall perish.' Remember: the opposite of *righteous* is *ungodly*—no holiness without faith; and again, the opposite of *ungodly* is *righteous*—no faith without holiness. 'Jehovah *knoweth* the way,' and the end of the way; but it is 'the way of the *righteous*.' Is mine a 'righteous' way? Oh, let me ever seek it in heart, life, and speech!

II.

THE KING.

- 1 WHY do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?
- 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,
Against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying,
- 3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.
- 4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh : the Lord shall have them in
derision.
- 5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore dis-
pleasure.
- 6 Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.
- 7 I will declare the decree : the Lord hath said unto me,
Thou art my Son ; this day have I begotten thee.
- 8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.
- 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron ;
Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
- 10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings ; be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
- 11 Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
- 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry,
And ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.—PSALM II.

THIS Psalm of the royal installation of our Jesus, and of His proclamation to all men, forms a most appropriate sequel to the warnings and promises which had preceded. The ground alike of the world's doom and of the safety of the

Church is, that Christ has been anointed King for ever. Their folly must become manifest, and His grace must be established, for *He reigneth*. It almost reads like a history of the Church and the world from the first to the second coming of the Lord. Vers. 1-4 describe the 'course of this world;' vers. 4-10 the real state of matters as viewed from heaven; vers. 10 to the end contain a most sweet and pressing application, to be fully realized only in the day of 'His appearing.' Thus the Psalm is full of rich comfort for the present, and of strong confidence for the future (Rev. xi. 15, xix. 15).

Strange and most sad that the heathen should rage, 'kings set themselves,' and 'rulers take counsel together, against Jehovah and against His Messiah,'—were it not that the rebellious risings of our own hearts illustrate and explain the fact. And yet withal they imagine things of nought, 'vain things,' which can neither satisfy nor prosper. So general is this rebellious tendency, that the 'little flock' seems almost lost to view among the tumultuous multitude. '*Why*' should it be so, since His yoke is easy and His burden light? But 'the carnal mind is *enmity* against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' To own Christ is not natural to us. Even God's own people know and feel another law in their members warring against the law of the mind. Why should I wonder to find in others what I see in myself? There is nothing too vile for our hearts to conceive, nor too vain for our minds to imagine. But, blessed be God, there is nothing too difficult for His grace to devise, to overcome, or to accomplish. Lord, ever shine on us with the

light of Thy countenance! We want not lifeless abstractions—not a new law without, but Thyself—the risen, living Redeemer—to reign in us. Then Thy words and claims will not be ‘cords’ nor ‘bands,’ but life and liberty.

What a glorious transition, and what perfect rest to our souls, when we turn from earth to heaven! However the enemies may rise (as Calvin notes), they can never reach to heaven. Most comforting it is to know that the period of their apparently most unchecked fury and of their seeming success is that when Jehovah holds them in derision. For (as Luther writes) ‘all this is written for our instruction, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. For what is here written of Christ is an example to all His people. Every one who will be truly Christian, especially such as teach the word of Christ, must suffer from Herod and Pilate, from the Jews and heathens who rage against us, and speak many vain things, rise and take counsel against us. For this let each of us be prepared.’ Yet it is as if he said: ‘So certain is it that they speak in vain, however strong and mighty it may appear in the eyes of men, that God does not deem them worthy of such resistance as might be expected in a serious and great matter, and only laughs at them, as if it were a mean and contemptible thing, which is not worth anything. But what strength of faith is not here implied! For who would have believed that God laughed when Christ suffered and the Jews triumphed and prevailed? So also when we suffer and are oppressed, do we believe it that God laughs at our adversaries, while to the outward eye and sense it seems as if we were derided and oppressed both

by God and man?' And this fact, that He 'sitteth in the heavens,' implies not only that He is unassailed and unassailable, but that by faith we must rise to heaven in order not to be moved. And so can we calmly commit to Him not only our own cause, but much more His work and kingdom, whatever enemies arise against it. Our chief danger lies not in our enemies, but in our use of carnal weapons, or in our distrust of His help and presence. There is a glorious contrast between their vain imaginings and His decree (vers. 7, 8). Christ *is* the Messiah; the Father has installed Him as King; and this conveys the assurance of our safety, of the world's subjection (ver. 9), of the coming judgment (ver. 10), and of the eternal blessedness of His people (vers. 10-13). Ours then should be the attitude of calm trustfulness and believing expectancy.

'In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer' (and this is the practical application), 'I have overcome the world.' Yes, by Thy death, by Thy resurrection, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit! Most assuredly the course of events and the dispensations of Providence are under His immediate guidance and control (ver. 5). Not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without His knowledge and direction. Perfectly safe, then, in the midst of all upheavings, are His Church and cause (ver. 6). Sin is ever its own curse, and rebellion its own punishment. Most precious of all—in opposition to the 'kings,' the 'rulers,' is *His* King, enthroned in *His* holy hill of Zion. We need not fear either for the Church, the world, or ourselves. Zion is *His* holy hill, and Christ is *His* holy King. He has taken the Church

as the signet on His finger, on which He has engraven—Love ; and with this signet He seals His administration of the moral universe.

Oh, what a gift was that of His Son to our earth ! (ver. 7.) It implies not only our own salvation, but the final redemption of the whole world, when Messiah's kingdom shall extend to the utmost bounds of the earth. This is a hope well worth waiting for, praying for, working for, and resting in. When we shall be wakened from our graves, it will be to see our earth clothed with beauty and adorned with righteousness. We go to sleep in a storm ; we shall rise in unclouded calm ; we lie down in winter's darkness ; we rise in summer's brightness. We shall not know this earth again, when, like Sarah of old, she has her youth and beauty restored to bear the children of promise. A brief, though most awful, day of judgment ; a long millennium of joy. And even now our Lord reigneth ; He sitteth enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Our petitions are answered ; our position is secured ; our happiness is insured. Our very hearts leap for joy at the thought, and our souls are *greatly* strengthened. 'What is thy petition, and what is thy request ?' Lord, of all petitions, chiefly this—to be wholly Thine ; of all requests, mainly this—to be kept by Thy grace blameless unto the end.

But praying and working are always combined. 'I believed, therefore have I spoken.' We cannot but speak the things which we have heard and seen. True wisdom—not vain imaginations—we would covet for ourselves, and commend to others (vers. 10, 11). 'Not the wisdom of this

world, nor of the princes of this world, that cometh to nought ;' but 'the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory,' and which 'God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit.' Personal contact with the Son of God, close cleaving unto Him, and that blessedness of absolute and unlimited trust in Him at *all* times, whatever betide us,—these are those best gifts which our souls earnestly desire and follow after.

I. O my soul, learn to view men and matters in the right and true light. The vain imagining and babblings of science, falsely so called, cannot shake my faith, which rests on personal experience, nor the display of power move my allegiance to the great King. Their pride shall be laid low, and their tumults hushed into the silence of destruction. But how oftentimes, alas, does my imagination wander, and how sadly am I brought under the influence of mere outward power and pomp! A man is not wise for his learning, if he lacketh true knowledge ; nor rich for his wealth, if he have not the pearl of great price ; nor powerful for his circumstances, if he have not the ear of the Almighty, and dwell in His secret place. O my soul, fain wouldest thou be found in the bundle of life ; thou earnestly desirest to be of those that 'trust in Him.' And good cause hast thou to trust the risen Jesus for His love and for His grace. Many are the things which stagger thee, both within and without. But there are spiritual *realities*, and exceeding great and precious promises. Keep, then, all the closer by Him. Lord, Thou knowest how rebellious my heart is—this day, in the peculiar circumstances in which Thou hast placed me ; under

the peculiar cross which Thou hast laid upon me ; in the peculiar work which Thou hast given me to do ; in the peculiar trials and temptations which beset me. But I will keep all the closer by Thee, my risen Lord, in the storm which besets, and in the night which gathers around me. I will trust Thee all the more fully, and cleave to Thee all the more earnestly, and that in those very things which threaten my peace and my safety.

2. '*Thy holy* hill of Zion.' Never let me forget that Zion is *His* hill ; not mine, nor thine, but *His*. Who art thou that judgest thy neighbour ? If thou canst not praise with him, pray for him. My neighbour's sins and shortcomings are calls to prayer for myself as well as him—all the more when I realize, however faintly, the awful future of the rebellious. Moreover, let me increasingly feel that His hill is a *holy* hill. Holiness for ever becometh His house and people. Let me watch the gates of my heart—nay, rather the throne of my heart. This day, and in view of the enemies arrayed against me, Lord, help me by Thy grace : work Thou in me, that I may work out my own salvation with fear and trembling.

3. The Lord has died—despond not. The Lord is risen—doubt not. The Lord is exalted—fear not. The Lord reigneth—hesitate not. The Lord returneth—delay not. Believe, and that with all simplicity and with all joy. Believe, and bring before Him the wants of thine own heart and daily life ; the daily requirements of thy soul : trust, and look upwards. Believe, and bring before Him the wants of thy friends—both for body and soul : trust, and look up-

wards. Believe, and bring before Him the wants of the Church : trust, and look upwards. Believe, and bring before Him the wants of the world ; and still trustingly look upwards. 'The night cometh, and also the morning.' Soon the Lord shall return, and thou shalt welcome Him—thou and all saints ; nay, earth itself, and all that dwell therein. Then occupy till He come ; and if, before that day dawn, thou art called to rest, lie down to sleep in hope of the blessed resurrection, and of the coming of the Lord with ten thousands of His saints. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

HEAVENLY city, city blest,
Haven sweet of endless rest,
City safe from every danger,
Thee I hail while here a stranger ;
Thee I hail, for thee am sighing, &
Yearning, fainting e'en to dying.
What the joy thy folk are sharing,
With what festal gladness faring,
What the love their hearts entwining ;
With what gems thy walls are shining,
Jacinth and chalcedon banding,—
Know the saints within thee standing.
May I through this city's portal
Enter with the hosts immortal,
And with Moses and Elijah
Sing my grateful Alleluia !

J. S.

HILDEBERT.

III.

EVERLASTING HELP.

- 1 LORD, how are they increased that trouble me? many are they that rise up against me.
2 Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God.
Selah.
3 But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.
4 I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill.
Selah.
5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked: for the Lord sustained me.
6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about.
7 Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God!
For thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek-bone;
Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.
8 Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people.
Selah.—PSALM III.

A PRECIOUS morning song of faith this, after a dark night of trial and affliction. He knows in whom he hath believed. Having understood the principles of the Divine government in the covenant of grace (Ps. i.), and its mode of administration through Jesus Christ (Ps. ii.), he straightway applieth it to his own case and wants. He taketh God by His word, pleads the promise in prayer (vers. 3, 4), and then calmly

looks up for an answer (vers. 5, 6, 7), giving glory to God (ver. 8). And this is the nature of faith, to make personal application and appropriation of what God has declared in His Word. All that God hath spoken, I receive as spoken to *me*: I turn it into prayer (for faith is not knowledge, but implies *grace* to the needy and lost), and then in answer *expect* the promised blessing—all praise being due to Him; praise not only for this one instance of His faithfulness, but for the spring and source of all grace—His covenant-love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let us, then, ever keep before our minds these three elements of faith—*personal application*, on the ground of God's offers and promises; *prayer*, on the ground of that personal application; *trustfulness, peace, and expectancy*, on the ground of such prayer. I credit God's word, and therefore I take it home to myself: I take it as applying to me; and therefore, as a needy sinner, I plead with God for its realization by grace. Having so prayed believingly, it were nothing short of infidelity to doubt the answer. Therefore, having cast my burden upon the Lord, I am unburdened. 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' Yet from first to last is all the glory due to Him who 'worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure,' and the *work* of faith with power.'

The first requirement of a soul weighed down with care or sorrow is to have it rolled away, to be freed from its crushing pressure. For this there is only one way—to bring it straight to God (ver. 1). This applies not only in strictly spiritual, but, as in the present case, in outward troubles. Oh the delightful relief of having poured *all* our complaints

B

into His ear, of having spread *all* our wants before His eye, of having committed *all* our anxieties to His power! He is *our* God in Christ; He has the will and the power to deliver 'from so great a death'—so far as it is for His glory, and therefore for our good. At all events, our Saviour sympathizes, and therefore comforts (Heb. iv. 15). But the severest of all trials is that which threatens our spiritual wellbeing (ver. 2), especially after seasons of desertion or of backsliding. Not that the judgment of the world—which infers what shall be from what is, and only proceeds on the ground of tangible results—is here of much consequence. A believer never feels so independent of the opinion or favour of men, as when to onlookers he seems to stand most in need of it. The logic of the world is as perverse as its tender mercies are cruel. It suggests that, when there is no help *to* us in man, there is no help *for* us in God. Nay, even when its voice is that of Jacob, its hands are those of Esau. My soul, be thou still in God. Turn thou upwards, not outwards. Their hosts can be numbered; thine cannot: their resources can be calculated; thine pass all understanding. The word *impossible* has no place in the vocabulary of grace; it only applies to me, not to Thee. Then bursts forth the language of Abraham's faith (ver. 3, comp. with Gen. xv. 1)—it were difficult to say, whether more in the accents of prayer or of praise. For intense prayer ever merges into praise, as faith into sight. This divine '*but*' is the transition from earth to heaven, from man to God, from opinions to assurance—the Peter's rock on which the Church is reared: 'But Thou, O Jehovah, art a shield round

about me'—on every side, between me and them; and not only protection, but inward 'glory;' and not only inward glory, but also outward triumph—'the lifter up of mine head.'

In the language of Luther: 'Here he opposes three considerations to his former difficulties. He had spoken of *many enemies*; now he answers that the Lord is his *shield*. Again, as they set themselves against him to put him to shame before the world, he sets over-against it that the Lord raises him to glory. Lastly, in reply to their reproaches and derisions, he boasts that the Lord lifteth up his head. Thus he may be lonely and forsaken not only before men but in his own feelings; but before God and in Spirit, he is surrounded by a great multitude, and not lonely nor forsaken. However powerless and oppressed he may seem to the eyes of men, he is most strong and powerful before God and in Spirit, so that with great confidence he glories in the power of God with St. Paul, who saith, "When I am weak then am I strong." He that understandeth and hath experienced such temptation, will also understand how foolishly and wickedly many teach, that man is able naturally to love God above all things. Therefore the experience of this verse is not that of nature but of grace; not of free will but of the Spirit; of a very strong faith, which beholdeth God even through the darkness of death and of hell, as if seeming to forsake us, and yet recognises Him as our Shield; sees God as if persecuting, and yet recognises Him as our Help; sees God as if about to condemn, and yet recognises him as our Saviour. For he regards not that

which is seen and felt, but clings to the word which speaks of things that are not seen.'

Most instructive is the record of spiritual experience in ver. 4. The loud agonizing cry (indicated by the expressions used in the original) is, as always, followed, if not by an immediate *answer*, by immediate *hearing*, and that 'out of His *holy* hill,' from between the cherubim. The *answer* may be delayed—for reasons connected with His Providence or our sanctification; but the 'hearing' is immediate, and the assurance of this is like the Master's 'Peace, be still!' on the storm-tossed sea of Galilee. Anon we shall be 'on the other side.' Most precious also is the feeling that these are *covenant*-answers, even though they may imply the taking vengeance on our inventions.

The full value of a life of faith appears most touchingly in the calmness with which, under the most trying circumstances, we can lie down and sleep in the sweet sense of His love, with this experience as our lullaby, 'He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep;' and awake with this song on our lips, like dew sparkling in the morning sun, '*Jehovah* sustained me' (ver. 5). There is no anxious, nervous seeking for deliverance when faith has made its confessions to God. All that is left is to anticipate victory (vers. 6, 7). Nor can this urgency of personal want and personal application render us indifferent to the state of the Church at large. I never can pray so well for others as when I have to pray most for myself. My Sun of Righteousness shines not only into mine own heart; 'Thy blessing is upon Thy people'—upon all 'the Israel of God.' I delight

to feel myself one of that family in heaven and on earth on which His name is named. I can realize how many He sustains by His grace, delivers by His power, or calls in His loving compassion. Thy tender mercies are over all; but Thy *blessing*, O Father, is upon Thy chosen people. Selah.

1. How unutterably precious to be one of God's people! O my soul, inquire *fully* as to thy standing in Christ. Let not temporary pressure, driving thee to prayer, satisfy thee on this point. All men pray at some time; God's people alike pray at *all* times. Prayer and faith are not necessarily connected. All prayer is not of faith, though all faith be with prayer. Seekest thou the Lord himself more than the objects asked for? Art thou cleaving to Him as thy Saviour—*resting* on Him and in Him? Knowest thou what it is to be *still* in God in the darkest and stormiest night—yet trusting when thou seest not, and content to go to sleep, like Jacob of old, on the plains of Bethel? Oh, let me not be undecided! Let me now again take the *Lord* as my portion, as my *sole* portion, and as my portion for ever.

2. Many and varied are the adversaries which beset me round about this day. 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness.' What may seem trifling and small to those who know not all the circumstances and difficulties, may be heavy and most afflictive to me. That is a real trial to me which tries *my* faith, patience, and hope—whether it *seem* so to others or not. 'In all our afflictions He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved us.' What a sweet thought that this Psalm may have passed through the mind of Christ, or dropt from His lips, some morning in Bethany, or on the Mount of

Olives, or 'by the hill Mizar!' Though it be 'afar off,' I can follow the Master on the way marked by His footprints. This certainly will I seek to do—to cast all my burdens upon Him, to make known all my requests to Him. And then will I believingly look up for an answer, and calmly wait for the Lord. 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.'

3. Now let me look forward, in assured confidence, towards that morning which is so soon to dawn upon our earth. Oh, what a precious consolation this ver. 5 with which to close our lives, to murmur to ourselves with faltering lips as we pillow our head for death; what a *word* to shut our eyes with; what a night-song with which to go to sleep and to wake up in eternity! What a way-song this, when we resign ourselves to angels' charge, to carry us across Jordan! And it is true—most true: true, not because we feel it, but because it is a blessed fact; because Christ died and rose again, and sitteth at the right hand of God. He that commenced the work will, by grace, also accomplish and finish it, for the Lord sustaineth us.

Who trusts in God a strong abode
In heaven and earth possesses;
Who looks in love to Christ above,
No fear his heart oppresses.
In only Thee, dear Lord, I see
Sweet hope and consolation,
My shield from foes, my balm for woes,
My great and sure salvation.

Hymnologia Christiana.

IV.

REST AT EVEN.

- 1 HEAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness : Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress ; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.
- 2 O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame ? How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing ? Selah.
- 3 But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself : the Lord will hear when I call unto Him.
- 4 Stand in awe, and sin not : commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.
- 5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.

PSALM IV.

A MOST sweet and blessed evening-song this, of mingled praise and prayer. With such words of faith, of hope, and of love will we 'comfort' ourselves when we lie down at even to rest. The morrow, whatever it be, must be bright if the light of His countenance—in the face of His Anointed—be lifted up upon us. None other righteousness than that of Jesus ; none other deliverance than that through Jesus ; none other confidence than that from Jesus ; none other peace than that in Jesus : such are the grand pillars of this temple of praise. Equally marked is the *disclaiming* of every other help (vers. 2, 3, 6, 7), and the *claiming* by faith of, or rather the clinging in faith to, this all-sufficient and all-efficient Deliverer (vers. 1, 3, 7, 8). 'No confidence in the flesh,' all con-

fidence in the Lord, and in the Lord alone ; despondency and despair all around, boldness and assurance at a throne of grace : and that not merely with reference to the schemes of avowed enemies, but also to the doubtings of unbelieving believers (ver. 6). 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' And here we have this faith ; its roots, firmly struck in the righteousness of Christ, twining round the promises, which in Him are Yea and Amen, and lifting its head and opening its blossoms to the sunlight of His countenance.

This Psalm of praying praise, so well befitting saints while on earth, appropriately opens by bespeaking a favourable hearing on the ground of accepted righteousness and covenant relationship. For the assurance that we are always heard, makes us not only the more earnest in calling, but the more humble in beseeching, knowing why and how we are accepted. The expression, 'God of my righteousness,' brings up as its parallel and complement that (in Ps. lix. 10) of 'God of my mercy.' In Christ He is both the God of our righteousness and of our mercy, for 'mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' And this is a most firm basis on which to rear our prayers. Nor is He an unknown God, a stranger, 'as a wayfaring man that tarrieth but for a night.' A believing retrospect reveals many and precious experiences of deliverance from sore straits. Yet this is one main characteristic of such deliverances, that they are rather an *enlarging* in, than a setting free from distress. It needs not the going round the Red Sea. He can take us through it by mak-

ing its water stand up as an heap, and so forming of them a double wall of security. Thus alike appears His power, our unbelief is put to shame, and we are kept humbly dependent. A most striking illustration of this is recorded in 2 Kings vii. 1. How often and marvellously has God 'enlarged us,' and His whole Church, 'in distress'—in the *great* distress, and in every distress both of soul and of body! How often, when so enlarged, have we thought and vowed that surely never again would we distrust Him; and yet how sadly have we fainted and failed! Surely it needs, even in this respect, the prayer, '*Have mercy upon me*, and hear my prayer.'

There is unspeakable comfort and assurance in the mere fact of being thus allowed, with well-grounded confidence, to appeal to His covenant mercy. It seems to carry under its wings songs of victory. When we place ourselves on God's side, the malice of our enemies is alike folly and sin. In such circumstances alone is there safety, and we can confidently ask of men, 'How long?' yet looking for the answer to it (so far as *we* are concerned) to God (ver. 3). And let us, as we pass by these precipices and pitfalls, mark, as sadly instructive, that in reality the 'sons of men' '*love* vanity' (literally *emptiness*, that which contains nothing), and '*seek*' (aim and follow) 'after leasing' (or a *lie*). To all such attempts against us we can calmly oppose the '*But* know'—the eternal decree of mercy, which involves all safety as well as all good.

The wording of ver. 3, with which we may allay not only the rebellious risings of enemies, but also those of our own hearts,

is very peculiar. The first clause implies the eternal purpose in grace which is the *objective* ground of our safety: '*Nevertheless* the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.' The second clause expresses the *subjective* ground of our safety in a constant exercise of faith and prayer, caused by a constant experience of grace, and resulting in constantly new displays of grace: 'Jehovah will hear when I call unto Him.' And this is the only safe or true way of presenting the doctrine of the certain ultimate safety of the saints, by showing that Jehovah's *choice* of grace stands in indissoluble connexion with our constant *experience* of grace as manifested in a life of faith and prayer. Never let us separate or forget the connexion between these two: 'Jehovah hath set apart him that is godly for Himself;' and 'Jehovah will hear when I call unto Him.' The one is indeed the application of the other. Again, the terms are specially chosen. The word used for 'set apart' is very peculiar. It is closely related to another, which means to *cleave*, to *cut down*, or to *cut out*, and signifies to *make a distinction* or *separation*. Thus it is used very instructively in Ex. ix. 4, xi. 7, in reference to God's dealings with Israel. Its next meaning is that of *miraculous* distinction or separation (indeed, the word for *miracle* is derived from it), as in Ex. viii. 18, and notably in Ps. xvii. 7, 'Show thy marvellous loving-kindness' ('marvellously distinguish *Thy* grace')—literally, 'set apart Thy mercy.' In fact, these two expressions are the same as those used here, 'Jehovah hath *set apart* him that is *godly*.' For the common Hebrew term for 'godly' is derived from the word 'grace' or 'mercy,' which in turn is

closely related to, if not drawn from, one which conveys the ideas of secret counsel, intimate converse, and assemblage. But if such be the case,—if Jehovah has made a miraculous distinction and separation of those who have experienced mercy, and if they, in virtue of this constant experience, continue to call, and are heard,—most solemn and affecting does the warning of ver. 4 become. It has not the destruction but the conversion of these enemies in view, and seems to treat them as estranged from God rather in *heart* than in profession. The progress is noteworthy: from being arrested and unable to go on in sin ('stand in awe, and sin not') to self-examination, and then the answer dying on the lips (the word 'be still' conveying the arrestment of the sound by the closed mouth). Next follows application by that 'new and living way' ('offer the sacrifices of righteousness'; comp. with ver. 1, 'God of my righteousness'); and, finally, 'trust in Jehovah'—the choice of the preposition intimating cleaving to the Lord.

Thus, if all human help is cut off, and all human hope is gone, do we learn still better to know and to love our covenant-God, when we feel ourselves alone with Him, and when we experience that He is sufficient for us.

But more sad and discouraging far than the direct opposition of the ungodly, is the unbelief and faintheartedness of God's own people. Of all graces, that of patience needs most the constant supply from on high to keep its lamp burning. For patience consists not in *bearing*, but in enduring to the end. It is continuance in well-doing when all looks ill. It is not merely bearing, but bearing in faith, in

hope, and in love. It is the constant expectation of deliverance in the midst of perhaps protracted disappointments and increasing improbabilities. And it is prayerful expectancy, detached from all that is seen, and attached to all that is promised. And it is calm, cheerful, working, occupying expectancy, 'till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts.' Hence the frequency of admonitions to patience (Rom. v. 3, 4, xv. 4; Col. i. 11; 2 Thess. iii. 5; Heb. vi. 12, x. 36, xii. 1; James i. 3, 4; Rev. iii. 10), and the important part which patience sustains in the work of our sanctification.

1. How marvellous is His grace! Not for anything that I am, or that I have, but because of His infinite mercy, has He called me. These three points let me bear in mind: nothing in myself, all from Him, and separation from others. The first I remember for humiliation, the second for thanksgiving, the third for watchfulness, and all three for prayer. Were it not for grace, like others I would have strayed, and at last been lost. Were it not for grace, when I began to feel my sins, I should have despaired, and should still despair. Were it not for grace, I could never hope to stand in the evil day. Grace means that Jehovah has set us apart. It is the personal dealing of Jehovah with us, both individually and efficaciously. But if Jehovah has set me apart, it was *for Himself*—for His glory and praise. We are God's property: blood-bought, love-sought, and Spirit-brought. It is of the greatest importance to keep ever before our minds and hearts—not for ourselves, but for Him. I must be conscious of the object of my second creation; I

must aim to attain it ; and if He has done so much for me, not only gratitude and love, but conscious devotion, become me. So help us, Lord, not as of outward necessity, but willingly, to give ourselves to Thee. Let it be inward necessity laid upon us, even a sense of Thy constraining love. Tasting the goodness of the Lord, let us be a willing people in the day of Thy power ; and oh ! let *this* be a day of power !

2. Most precious is this encouragement to prayer, derived from *grace*. We may ask all things when we address the throne of grace ; we may come at all times and under all circumstances, and just as we are when we come to the God of all grace. And all grace is treasured up in Jesus. Truly, we have *strong* consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. If we have not yet received, we may come to have our wants supplied ; if we have already received, we may plead covenant promises and covenant mercies for more grace, and that in every time of our need. But grace and prayer are always conjoined. Perseverance to the end means perseverance in grace ; and perseverance in grace means continuance in faith and prayer. No answers without requests ; no glory without holiness ; no holiness without life in God and with God. This, then, holds true, blessed be His name ! Whatever my past history, or my present state and condition, my misery consists not so much in what I am, as in what I refuse to be. If I finally perish, or if I presently fail and sink, the reason lies not so much in the past as in the present. All doubts of His grace, or of His ability or willingness to save, are of the devil. Every one may become what the love of God, the blood of

Jesus, and the efficacious working of His Holy Spirit, can effect. So make me what Thou wouldest have me to be !

3. Our deliverance may be much nearer and much greater than we expect. Alas ! we are ever curtailing or living beneath our privileges. We are like misers, who know not how to use the treasures which belong to them. And God has various modes of deliverance. To be *enlarged* in distress is certainly to be delivered from it ; for it no longer presses upon us. Yet does it not follow that in our prayers we ought only to seek *inward*, not *outward* relief. Ours it is to make *all* our wants known to Him, and that in perfect simplicity and faith. We are assured of an answer—nay, of more than an answer : of Himself with us. The *how*, or the manner of the answer, we *gladly* leave with him who knoweth both our case and our frame. Forward, then, and this day, and, in my present circumstances and wants, let me make trial of it. Surely, I have much anguish, many wants. Let my words flow apace. Only let me be really in earnest. Let this God be my God in Christ, and, most assuredly, He will be my ‘guide even unto death.’ This I believe, and believing apply, and applying rejoice. Amen !

ABIDE among us with Thy grace,
Lord Jesus, evermore,
Nor let us e’er to sin give place,
Nor grieve Him we adore.

Abide with us in faithful love,
Our God and Saviour be,
Thy help at need, oh let us prove,
And keep us true to Thee !

Lyra Germanica.

V.

STILLNESS IN GOD.

- 6 THERE be many that say, Who will shew us any good ?
Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.
7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart,
More than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.
8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep :
For thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.—PSALM IV.

THE hindrances and discouragements with which God's people meet, either in their heavenly career or in their labours and undertakings for Christ, are manifold and various. Never did a pilgrim set out on his way to the heavenly Jerusalem, but it seemed as if it were impossible to reach its pearly gates. Never has anything been attempted for the glory of God, but the difficulties appeared insuperable. In all such cases we must look to the end, not to the way. The way is not ours but the Lord's. Nor shall we be only once tried. At every step and stage, the flesh, the world, and the devil will suggest innumerable dangers. And yet our main danger lies rather in listening to their suggestions than in what is suggested. Let us remember that for every Caleb and Joshua there are always ten unbelieving spies ; for every one who rendereth the grateful homage of heart and life, nine who return not to

give thanks ; and that it is not always the lying message of a servant of Baal by which even an old prophet is destroyed. Our danger here lies in taking counsel with flesh and blood. The world and worldly-minded believers judge of things as they appear, and according to their human probabilities. Ours it must be not to take that element at all into consideration. We set out on the way to Zion, not because we are likely to go on well, but because the Lord has called us by His grace. We engage in any work, not because we have human encouragement, but because we trust in the living God. Until there is such separation in heart and mind and life, we shall not know what real liberty or joy is. Our Christian course is not a balancing of probabilities, but the victory of our faith over the world. This may be stigmatized by those who know not the firmness of our foundation, as fanaticism. And such it would be, were it not for the promises and the presence of the living God. For enthusiasm is that which wants any other basis or support than our own feelings. But faith encompasses impossibilities in the strength of the living God (Heb. xi. 33-36). All is impossible to us—this is our knowledge of self ; all is possible to Him—this is our knowledge of God. And we know what He has said, and what we have experienced. Every fresh hindrance can only be a fresh call to faith and prayer. And thus every obstacle will be converted into a fresh occasion for interposition. Most sweet and precious is what we get directly from God, and all the more so since our danger lies not so much in apostasy from God, as in becoming wearied, and then looking to man, to second causes, as instruments or symptoms of our deliver-

ance: *Who will show us any good?* And the temptation becomes all the greater when 'there be *many* that say' thus. Here we can find only one way of escape, if the heart, weaned from all other confidence, and clinging to Jesus, replies, 'Lord, to *whom* shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' In the present instance, the conviction so expressed is framed in the form of precious prayer, which almost seems fragrant with the *certainty* of answer. Nor is it *any* good, or *some* good which is sought; but the Lord, and the Lord alone, and the Lord as surety for *all* good. What we primarily seek is not outward deliverance, but inward grace to cleave to Him. All the rest will He give in due time. 'Jehovah, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us;' or, more literally, 'Lift Thou up upon us as a banner the light of Thy countenance.' Thus taking up the language of the Aaronic benediction (Num. vi. 24-27), this prayer looks up to Jehovah *alone*; asks for light from *His* countenance; seeks the dispelling of our darkness by shedding this light upon our path; and regards His manifestation in grace as our banner in warfare. The light of His countenance in Jesus our Saviour is our light, our joy, our strength, and our defence. Experience of His grace is all-sufficient comfort and all-efficient help. If we have Christ, we have all things; 'the joy of the Lord shall be your strength.' And this fountain once opened, how copiously do the healing streams issue! We have not merely 'good hope' through grace, but we are 'as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.' 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.' Truly our poverty forms a

noble contrast to their riches. This is *to be content in God and still in God*; this is the quiet life in God. When they have attained to the fullest all their desires, they are most poor; and that perhaps in proportion to their wealth. The treasure of 'gladness' in the believer's heart—the pearl of great price for which he willingly parts with everything else—is far better than the abundance which fills their barns and wine-presses. 'Thou fool!' neither hast thou present peace, nor is thy future provided for. Having thus not banished but lost care, and found joy because we have found Christ—sweetly, gently, calmly, whether on the evening of day, or of sorrow, or of life, 'I will both lay me down in peace and sleep;' or, more accurately, 'In peace will I lay me down at once and sleep.' We toss not in unrest, nor does sleep flee from our fevered frame. Sleep, or at least rest of mind and heart, comes *at once* when we lie down in this peace. Jehovah has *made* our habitation; He compasseth us about; and we dwell 'in safety.' And 'when I awake,' 'I shall be satisfied with Thy likeness.'

1. O my soul, here is the banner of thy strength, and the source of thy comfort. How often hast thou tormented thyself about the schemes of enemies and the doubts of friends! *When* shall I learn this: 'Say ye not, A confederacy, to all those to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread'? This is a sin to be greatly humbled for, and a source of weakness to be greatly deplored. If I really *believe*,—if I take God by His gracious word, and rest upon Jesus as my

Saviour,—why or of what should I be afraid? And yet this is one of the sins which more easily beset us. Unbelief or non-belief, is inquietness. This holds true equally of the burden of our guilt and of every other burden. Faith hath peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Once more, then, let me come: realizing the facts of redemption, let me *now* cast myself upon Him, nor seek other source of rest, nor require other warrant for peace or joy, than God in Christ.

2. I can now perceive what will bring real and *immediate* relief. I must pray. I must apply all that I believe, and apply with it all unto God. Living faith breathes prayer; otherwise faith were a work. But faith is the ground and hath the warrant for prayer; and while faith obtains all, it obtains it *from God*, and as of grace. 'I believed, therefore have I spoken'—not only to man, but primarily to God. Faith lays hold on Christ, and Christ leads to the Father, and He speaks for us and with us, when we speak in Him and through Him. Of all the exercises, the sweetest is this converse with God. It is not only for what it receives (Heb. xi. 33, 34), but for what it is, that we so highly prize it. We soar up to Him; we have rest in Him; we delight ourselves in God; we have victory through Him. Oh, why art thou so languid in prayer, so weak in faith; why still a beggar in rags, when all wealth is at thy disposal? 'Lord, teach us to pray.' 'Lord, increase our faith.' 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.'

3. 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness.' But whatever sorrow it be which weighs me down, let me learn this twofold mystery—of Divine carelessness and of absolute security. Divine carelessness springs from faith and prayer ('watch

and pray'), and absolute security flows from free and sovereign grace. Yet are these two always combined,—my application through grace, and His manifestation in grace. *Teneo et teneor*—I hold and am holden. And thus am I absolutely secure against whomsoever: 'For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

JESU, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills the breast ;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.
Tongue never spake, ear never heard,
Nor e'er from heart o'erflowed
A dearer name, a sweeter word,
Than Jesus, Son of God.
O hope of every contrite heart,
O joy of all the week,
To those who fall how kind Thou art !
How good to those who seek !
But what to those who find ? Ah, this
No tongue nor pen can show ;
The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His loved can know.

BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX.
(*Hymnologia Christiana.*)

VI.

A B B A, F A T H E R.

- 1 GIVE ear to my words, O Lord ; consider my meditation.
- 2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God : for unto thee will I pray.
- 3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord : in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.
- 4 For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness ; neither shall evil dwell with thee.
- 5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight : thou hatest all workers of iniquity.
- 6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing : the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.—PSALM V.

ANOTHER sweet and precious morning prayer this. Though specially suitable for seasons of distress, under calumny, and the wicked attempts of the enemies of God and of His Church, it is applicable to every morning of life. Nor let us overlook the fact that so large a proportion of the Psalms is given to God's sorrowing people, as indicating the promise alike of the cross and of the crown. Where God has promised much, He will perform much. Much poverty, many riches ; and 'blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.'

The subject of this Psalm is *prayer* and its *answer*. Prayer

is here presented under a variety of aspects, as 'words,' 'meditation,' 'the voice of cry,' and 'intercession' (vers. 1, 2). Its urgency appears in vers. 2, 3, and its special need in vers. 4, 5, 6. Then follows the anticipated answer to prayer in the experience of personal mercy (ver. 7), of personal fellowship with God (ver. 7), and of personal guidance (ver. 8); together with the vindication of God's government (vers. 9, 10), and the joyous safety of His people through grace (vers. 11, 12). Thus from the *subjective* does the 'sweet singer' rise to the *objective*, and ultimately finds a firm and sure resting-place in the sovereign mercy of Jehovah and in the dispensation of covenant grace (ver. 12).

Very noteworthy, in the experience of God's praying people, is the gradual intensifying of supplication: 'While I was musing, the fire burned.' Rare prayer is cold prayer. In His presence, and under His sunshine, our cold, hard hearts gradually warm, soften, and expand. He who prays rarely will ever be at a loss for subjects of prayer. But 'my heart was,' or became, 'hot within me; *in my meditation*' (authorized version, 'While I was musing') 'the fire burned' (or, perhaps, 'enkindled') (Ps. xxxix. 3). So here also, 'my words' are followed by 'my meditation,' and this by 'the voice of my cry.' The petitions seem to come from ever deeper sources, and more solemn and urgent becomes the prayer. The term 'meditation' conveys the idea of still, sweet, earnest, thoughtful speaking,—the word, which only occurs here and in Ps. xxxix. 3, being derived from that which signifies soft murmuring, and sounds like those of the harp, or of a dove, and also deep thinking and consideration.

On the other hand, the 'cry' is a loud and earnest appeal for deliverance. In connexion with this, Jehovah is entreated (literally) 'to lend His ear' to our words, to 'understand' our meditation, or still, lisping prayer, and 'earnestly or interestedly to hear' the voice of our loud cry for help. How sweet to think that it matters not in what form our prayers rise! God has a mode of hearing for every mode of asking, and suited to it. With some, it is well-ordered words; with others, earnest inward pleading, like Hannah's; and with others, 'loud cries,' like those of the disciples, 'Lord, save us; we perish!' But He openeth His hand liberally, and giveth unto all 'food convenient' for them. The main point is believingly to look up for an answer. And why should I not 'pray' (literally, 'intercede') with all confidence, since He is 'my King and my God'? David was but the meanest subject of 'my King,' and Paul 'the least of all saints' of 'my God.' Yet is He also my King, to rule and deliver; my God, to bless and to sanctify. All subjects have equal rights, and all worshippers equal privileges. And surely if one thing is more fully implied than another in these terms, it is my perfect safety. For the King would lose His kingdom if He lost me, or if I were lost. It is this which gives such mighty encouragement to prayer. We can understand how those who do not believe will not pray; but how those who pray will not believe, is indeed passing strange. Surely they cannot have felt the power of these words, 'My *King* and my *God*!' The King will do it; with all reverence be it said, the King must do it. God *can* do it—when, where, and how He pleases—and even in me. After the miracle of grace

which brought me to pray, every other miracle seems almost intelligible.

With such convictions and feelings,—under the ‘constraining’ sense of ‘the love of Christ,’—the first movement of the soul is ever towards God. ‘Jehovah,—morning shalt Thou hear my voice, morning will I prepare (the sacrifice of heart and lips) for Thee, and intently look up, or watch.’ How blessed the day when our first look is a look *upwards*; when our first conscious thoughts rise in sweet fellowship to Him; and when we prepare for work by preparing for Him, and intently looking and watching for His help! It seems as if God’s voice had waked us from sleep, and, like Samuel of old, we answered, ‘Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth.’ It seems as if mind and heart, with Martha-like diligence and Mary-like spirit, ‘prepared’ the wood, and the sacrifice, and the candlestick, and the shewbread (for with reference to all these ‘preparations’ is the expression, which is a sacrificial one, used), and then intently looked up for the fire to descend, and the Shechinah to rest upon it all. Truly these were spiritual sacrifices offered by believing worshippers under the Old Testament; and by us, for whom, under the New Testament, God has ‘provided some better things.’ Morning prayers are fresh and joyous prayers; and oftentimes the most precious meditation is that ‘which prevents the dawning.’

Such help is most needful in view of the dangers which threaten us, both from wickedness within and the wicked without. But here we have perfect assurance. God hath not ‘pleasure in wickedness,’ therefore shall not ‘evil dwell’ (‘abide,’ or even ‘tarry as a guest’) ‘with Him.’ (Comp. the

parallel expression and sentiment in Isa. xxxiii. 14) 'The foolish' (or rather 'the mad,' the word being derived from loud, tumultuous, mad conduct) 'shall not stand' (or be able to 'set themselves' in hostile array—the expression being the same as in reference to 'the kings of the earth' in Ps. ii. 2, and the contrast most marked) 'before Thine eyes.' 'Thou—the Holy One—hatest all workers of iniquity.' 'And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' Let us mark the *character* of sin, and its necessary but most fearful *end* (ver. 6). Very instructive also is it to understand the real nature of folly and the meaning of iniquity. In truth, as the term in the original shows, it is 'a thing of nought, vain and false;' yet 'the heavy breathing of one who gathers up his strength' in daring opposition to God, though at the same time 'a mere breath,' and also 'the heavy breathing of one who is wearied,' 'labour and sorrow.'

Such is sin; but what is grace, and who has made me to differ? All I have and am I owe it to Thee; and doubly precious does all become since I owe it to Thee. I can never think lightly of Providence, in its bearing on the kingdom, so long as I pray, 'Lead us not into temptation;' nor can I be unmindful of the constant need of inward grace, so long as I add, 'But deliver us from evil.' Truly it is 'an evil thing and bitter' to forsake Jehovah our God. And how marvellous is that grace which has found a remedy, which has sought us in our low and lost state, and made us who were rebels, kings and priests unto God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ!

1. Let me learn more fully the character of sin. We are too apt to think of it only according to its outwardly manifest consequences. It is that 'evil thing' which separated our souls from God, and enveloping us in its darkness still keeps from us the light of His countenance. It is that evil thing which crucified Christ and ruined our souls. It is that 'bitter' thing which poisoned all, introduced death, deceives, blinds, and destroys those multitudes who forsake Jehovah. Nor are we sufficiently alive to its insidious approaches. Commencing as folly, it often grows into iniquity. A 'foolish' look, gesture, or sentence, may lead to incalculable consequences. With the utmost jealousy should we guard the issues of our hearts. One moment off our guard may lead to sad results to ourselves and others. And to this some are naturally more liable than others. Nor is there effective safety against this, other than keeping close to Jesus, remembering our high and holy calling, and through grace seeking to walk worthy of it.

2. How sweet is it to cultivate a spirit of prayer! Thus have we this threefold security. We have assurance of answer; nay, we have already the answer even in the prayer. The Spirit whereby we cry is 'the Spirit of adoption;' and His utterance within us is already 'Abba, Father.' We may be, and if believing are, more assured of answer to prayer than of any outward fact. Again, by cultivating prayer our hearts are sweetly disposed toward God, and a spirit of calm, of rest, and of stillness, settles upon them. For when the Lord hushes the storm on the lake of Galilee, in answer to the entreaty of His people, He not only commands the wind

and it desists from its howling, but also the waves, and they lie still and silent at His feet. Lastly, does He in answer to our cry so dispose of His Providence as that all things assuredly work together for good, for our deliverance, and sanctification, for His glory and the manifestation of His grace. Therefore ought 'men always to pray and not to faint.'

3. Lord, what a remedy is this which Thou hast provided when Thou gavest Thyself to us, as a refuge in time of trouble! This day let me examine myself; let me hasten to the fountain opened in the house of David for all sin and uncleanness; let me make known my case and seek for grace. Lord, let not this be a day without the light of Thy countenance and the refreshment of Thy grace. Nearer, still nearer to Thee, O my God and my King. Deliver me; reign over me; keep me; keep me for Thyself. Let not my faith fail; yet if it falter, let Thy grace be sufficient. And make and keep us pure within, so shall we in heart and life praise Thy blessed Name, world without end. Amen.

THE lamb is in the fold
In perfect safety penn'd :
The lion once had hold,
And thought to make an end :
But One came by with Wounded Side,
And for the sheep the Shepherd died.

S. JOSEPH OF THE STADIUM.
(*Hymns of the Eastern Church.*)

VII.

LIGHT AND LOVE.

- 7 BUT as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy ; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.
- 8 Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies : make thy way straight before my face.
- 9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth ; their inward part is very wickedness ; their throat is an open sepulchre ; they flatter with their tongue.
- 10 Destroy thou them, O God : let them fall by their own counsels ; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions ; for they have rebelled against thee.
- 11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice : let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them ; let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.
- 12 For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous ; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.—PSALM V.

THE distinguishing mercy of our God is at all times the theme of our loudest praise. 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself ; but in me is thine help.' Whether we consider the 'hole of the pit' whence we are digged, or the high position to which we are called, our wonderment and adoring gratitude are equally called forth. It is not that we had been better or more favourably disposed than others. We all 'were as sheep going astray.' And who has made us to differ ? All we have and are, we owe it to Him ; and doubly

precious does all become since we owe it to Him. It is very marked how providence and grace co-operate. The peculiar leadings by which we are brought within the range and reach of grace, and the peculiar grace by which these leadings are improved for spiritual good, alike bear witness to His wisdom, goodness, and truth. And here the provision of His house and ordinances holds a very prominent place. Whether the words of verse 7 be regarded as the reply of spiritual confidence with which the believer meets the enemies of God and of his soul, or as the spiritual contrast and consolation which he sets before him, as against those whom 'Thou shalt destroy,' it accurately marks the feelings of God's people in that respect.

To be allowed to go into His house is one of the most precious privileges of God's people, due to the riches of His grace, or, as it might be rendered, to 'Thy much grace.' When the house of God is to us indeed '*Thy* house,' and we enter it under a constraining sense of 'Thy much grace,' we shall 'worship'—or, literally, 'cast ourselves on the ground'—'towards the temple of Thy holiness.' Experience of much grace leads not to familiarity, but to holy awe; which is far different from slavish fear, in that it springs not from any apprehended consequences to *ourselves*, but from apprehension of *His* majesty and character. Accordingly, the 'worship in fear' corresponds to the coming into His house 'in the multitude of mercy.' Most appropriate, as a sequel to this morning *worship*, is the morning *service*, which forms the burden of prayer in ver. 8. Let us earnestly avoid the confusion of ideas which would represent worship as *service*,

instead of joyous preparation for service in daily life, and which too often ends in making of this supposed worship our only service. True service most appropriately follows worship, and is its practical application. What we have professed and asked, what we have sought and obtained, we apply and show forth in every-day life. We rise from our knees to work for the Master. But this needs special grace, both so far as we are concerned ('lead me'), and so far as 'the way' is concerned. Here appears the need of guidance on His part; and on ours, of willingness simply and absolutely to follow. Here also our own ignorance, weakness, and inability are most painfully felt. But it is '*Thy way*,' and Thou canst make it both plain (or even) and straight before us (both expressions being included in the Hebrew term). And these two pleas may we urge in our prayer—God's 'righteousness,' and our 'enemies.' For the covenant of grace, through Christ Jesus, provides for the daily wants, spiritual and temporal, of His people, in connexion with the gift of the Holy Ghost and the finished work of the Saviour. And the presence of 'mine enemies' affords me fresh ground for urgency, as the glory of God cannot admit of their triumph or of my defeat. This all the more that they are such as here described. For even the term used for 'enemies' designates those who follow and watch with hostile intent,—being derived from a word which means 'to watch narrowly with hostile purpose.'

How solemn to think of our responsibility as the representatives of the kingdom of God, with enemies watching on every side for our halting, and narrowly observing us! But

herein also lies our comfort, that God cannot, under such circumstances, leave us to 'the will of our enemies.' Very precious have we again and again experienced this consolation in pleading it with God. Equally sad and true is the portraiture of the 'enemies' of God and of His people, and very characteristic the description of their enmity. 'There is no steadfastness—nothing stable, firm, nor steadfast—in the mouth of any of them ; their inward part is very wickedness' (or rather corruption—the term signifying both lust and its termination, and is probably allied to the idea of a ' yawning gulf') ; ' an open sepulchre is their throat ; their tongue they make smooth.' That such purposes are in reality rebellion against God (ver. 10), that such rebellion must lead to condign punishment, and that He who loves the kingdom of God must desire such a consummation,—always bearing in mind the alternative in Ps. vii. 12, '*If he turn not,*'—are facts which we who know the sentiments of Holy Writ (1 Cor. xvi. 22 ; Gal. i. 8, 9 ; 2 Tim. iv. 14 ; 2 Pet. ii. 12, etc. ; 1 John ii. 22 ; 2 John 10, 11 ; Jude 11-13) feel to be appropriate under the New as under the Old Testament. And we feel this none the less acutely and sorrowingly that we daily plead for their realization in the petition, 'Thy kingdom come.'

But how sweet and precious is the consolation of God's people amid these impending judgments! Not only safe, but joyous, are they 'who put their trust in Thee' (literally, 'who seek a refuge or a hiding-place in Thee')—this being the Old Testament form of *faith*. Nay, 'for ever they shout for joy because Thou coverest them' (the same expression

and idea being here introduced as in Ps. xci. 4). Nor are these the utterances only of *faith* and of *hope*. It is also the experience of '*love*'—of the love of His name, or of God manifest in Christ; even of the glorious revelation of the Father's love in Jesus. 'We love Him because He first loved us.' Faith, hope, and love have each their own joy. Faith, which is repairing to the hiding-place, has the joy of rest (the Hebrew term here used being probably related to one which signifies *rest*); hope, which is looking to God for covering of shelter and defence, has songs of victory, even songs in the night; while love, or the experience of His name, has (as the expression shows) the joy of intense delight. And the reason of all this—is *in God*: *what* He will be to us, and *how* He will be and do it for us. 'For Thou, Jehovah, wilt bless the righteous.' And how? 'With favour' (literally, with 'good pleasure'—the Old Testament expression for 'love') 'wilt Thou compass him as with a vast shield,'—the idea being not that of an ordinary shield, but of one which covers the whole person, like the shield of Goliath (1 Sam. xvii. 17), or like the beautiful golden 'targets' which King Solomon made (1 Kings x. 16), or the 'shield and buckler' which is 'His truth' (Ps. xci. 4). 'This honour have all His saints.'

1. O my soul, how great and glorious are thy privileges under the covenant of grace! All thou needest hath been provided, and all that hath been provided is freely dispensed. Let me then come freely, and come in faith—ever believing in His love, or greater willingness to give than mine to receive. O the unspeakable relief contained in the word

'*grace*,'—'the multitude of Thy mercy,'—which claims nothing from me, and offers all to me for its own sake! Yet let me ever seek to learn the doctrine of *grace* in connexion with the personal pronoun 'Thy,' or in prayerful fellowship with my God. Thus alone shall I be preserved from presumption. Grace is a doctrine to be learned on my knees, to be understood on my knees, and to be applied on my knees.

2. Let me remember the connexion between praying and working. If I have come into His house, and worshipped toward His holy temple, then let me seek to be led, and ask to have His way made straight before my face. How many watch for my halting; and what an awful thing to bring discredit upon my holy profession! Whatever I may suffer, let it not be as an evil-doer. And for this purpose must I watch and pray. How ready am I to slip—how prone to wander! My only safety is in keeping close to my Lord. 'Lead me'—now, this day, and for ever. Let Thy providence and Thy grace co-operate; let me glorify Thee; grant me grace to serve Thee. And still will I remember: 'My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.'

3. From what terrible destruction have I been delivered! Truly humility becomes me, and fervent charity towards fellow-sinners. Yet, while I seek their good, let me never think little of their evil, but hate 'even the garment spotted by the flesh.' I would earnestly plead for sinners with God, and with sinners for God—not only by words, but by deeds. And all the more will I magnify that sovereign grace to

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which I owe all, and seek its shelter against all enemies. Thus greatly encouraged, will I go forward from day to day, and from strength to strength, till grace crown grace with glory, to the praise of Him who loved me and bought me with His precious blood.

OH ! come, reveal Thyself more fully,
That we may learn to praise more truly ;
Make every heart a temple true,
Filled with Thy glory overflowing,
More of Thy love each morning showing,
And waking praises loud and new,—
Here let Thy peace Divine
Over Thy children shine,
Ever ! ever !
And glad or sad, we joining sing,
' Thou, LORD, and only Thou art King.'

TERSTEEGEN.

(Hymns from the Land of Luther)

VIII.

SAVED AS BY FIRE.

- 1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
2 Have mercy upon me, O Lord ; for I am weak : O Lord, heal me ; for my bones are vexed.
3 My soul is also sore vexed : but thou, O Lord, how long ?
4 Return, O Lord, deliver my soul : oh save me for thy mercies' sake.
5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee : in the grave who shall give thee thanks ?
6 I am weary with my groaning ;
 All the night make I my bed to swim : I water my couch with my tears.
7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief ; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.
8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity ; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.
9 The Lord hath heard my supplication ; the Lord will receive my prayer.
10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed :
 Let them return and be ashamed suddenly.—PSALM VI.

ANOTHER morning prayer this (comp. ver. 6), but of a very different strain from the last, forming one of the seven 'penitential Psalms' (vi., xxxii., xxxviii., li., cii., cxxx., cxliii.) It is the utterance and entreaty, not merely of one greatly tempted, but of one suffering in consequence of sin, though we have not the means of deciding whether or not in consequence of any *special* sin. Yet how comforting to us, under a sense of

guilt and apprehended wrath, to have such an example and such a directory for prayer! '*Adest miseria*,' writes St. Gregory, '*adsit et misericordia*.' These three things appear very prominently in this Psalm: full confession of sin, full outpouring of the heart, and full confidence in the Lord. And these are the three elements in all godly sorrow. The first embraces acknowledgment of guilt, vindication of the Divine character, and godly horror of sin; the second is approach to God with softened heart and opened lips, to tell *all* our fears and wants; the third consists of laying hold on the divinely appointed remedy, embracing the promises by faith, and being well assured that, for the sake of Jesus Christ, He is able and willing to receive, to pardon, and to answer us in peace. Thus from the cry of anguish do we gradually emerge into the words of peace, and even into the song of joy.

What a pathetic strain runs through the deprecatory supplication of ver. 1! The 'anger' and 'hot displeasure' of Jehovah are apprehended, as having been justly deserved. Rebuke and chastisement are dreadful, chiefly so far as connected with sin. 'Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.' The first and most obvious effect of chastisement is self-examination and humiliation. Rebuke is God's call to repentance. But our most immediate feeling under it is that of being wellnigh overwhelmed. The remembrance not only of present, but perhaps of long past sins comes back upon us, and gradually deepens into a sense of utter vileness and wretchedness. All that we can here do

is to deprecate in most suppliant tones: 'Jehovah—not in Thine anger rebuke me, and not in Thy hot displeasure chasten me.' Yet the opening word, 'Jehovah,' is 'a door of hope.' It implies *grace*. Accordingly, vers. 2 and 3 apply ver. 1 in the way of entreaty. 'Have mercy upon me' (or, 'be gracious unto me;' show grace, do grace), 'O Jehovah.' Grace is the opposite of wrath and hot displeasure; and it is grace, not merely forgiveness, which is sought. If the effects even of *apprehended* wrath are such to body and soul that we feel 'weak,' or rather *faded*—like a plant over which the withering blight has passed; that our 'bones are vexed,' or rather 'are afraid,' 'tremble,' and that our 'soul is *much* afraid,' or 'trembleth much,'—what must the reality be! Truly horror and anguish have taken hold on us. Afflictions, trials, and sorrows may be bitter; but the root of bitterness is sin, and 'the strength of sin is the law.' Oh, fellow-sinner, what exultation that we are still on praying ground! 'It is an awful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!' The simple grandeur of these words comes with crushing weight upon the awakened conscience. 'From Thy presence whither shall I go?' What a cry of agony, when every open wound seems to cry out, yet not violently, but intensely, 'Heal me, O Jehovah!' There is a dreadful earnestness and reality which cannot brook delay: 'But Thou, O Jehovah, how long?'¹ My bleeding wounds will I lay upon Thy bleeding wounds, O Lamb of God, slain for me! Thus, and thus only, is there '*healing*.' Thou and I,

¹ This expression, 'How long?' was the constant comfort and motto of Calvin.

—as it were the only two beings in existence: I, the sinner wounded; Thou, the Saviour wounded. If there is not healing here, and healing for me, truly help is not anywhere.

Another cry of anguish: this time not from depths so low. Light seems gradually streaming in. A sense of the free love of God is returning. Jehovah *has been* gracious; Jehovah is *full* of grace. His grace is the cause of my hope and the plea of my prayer, and that in my low and helpless state. From first to last it must be His work, and a mighty as well as a marvellous work: '*Return, O Jehovah, deliver my soul*' (literally, '*pull out my soul*,' the same word as in Lev. xiv. 40—the expression occurring in the same connexion in 2 Sam. xxii. 20; Ps. iv. 15, lxxxi. 7); 'cause me, or make me, to be saved for Thy grace's sake.' Most full experience of evangelical repentance this; consisting of a view of ourselves, a view of God in Christ, with the prayer of faith as connecting bond. Not works, not amendment; but free grace, and all of Him 'who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure,' 'and the work of faith with power.' 'Not for the sake of my *merits*,' saith Luther, 'which are nothing at all. Therefore, help *for Thy mercy's sake*, that the glory and praise of Thy compassion may for ever appear in my salvation.' One glance into the yawning gulf beneath reveals alike the awful danger, and what the awakened soul chiefly dreads (ver. 5). It is not merely 'death,' or the separation of body and soul, which is the object of dread and awe, but death with 'Sheol' (rendered in our version 'the grave'), or the separation of body and soul from God,—the absence of all *honourable* remembrance of God (for that is implied in

the term), and of all loving, or *praiseful*, and thankful record of Him. To those who have realized in any measure 'the pains of hell,' it is not necessary to explain expressions (vers. 6, 7) which, while labouring to portray feeling, come far short of it. Aptly, one here also notes on ver. 6, that while 'a word is often incapable of expressing its own meaning, a tear can always say what it would.'

Such cry *cannot* be unheard ; for God is Jehovah. 'God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' While he is yet mourning, confessing, pleading, dreading *before God* (which is very different from fearing merely the consequences of sin or carrying our grief within us), light and comfort are suddenly poured into his soul, and that not from himself, nor from his own altered state of feeling, but from God. This experience is ever combined with holy shrinking from sin and holy separation from sinners (ver. 8). It almost seems as if the realization of his 'enemies' (ver. 7) had now led him to the realization of his Friend (ver. 8). Three times does he triumphantly repeat the assurance that he is heard (vers. 8, 9)—in his 'loud weeping,' his earnest 'supplication,' and his humble 'prayer.' And this is Christian assurance in its *practical* aspect and application: not any abstract belief or supposition, but continuous application to Him from the depths; with this twofold certainty—that 'Jehovah *hath* heard,' and that 'Jehovah *will* accept' (or, take; in our version 'receive') 'my prayer.' Amen—even so be it unto us. Through grace, by faith; and as for all the rest,—as for the enemies, whether men or devils,—safe, quite safe, joyously safe, safe

for time and for eternity ; for they are no longer mine but Thine enemies.

1. O my soul, again, and in the depths, learn this most sweet and blessed lesson, that 'we ought always to pray and not to faint.' This is the alternative, as thou well knowest : to pray or to faint. But grace has decided it in favour of praying, by the gift of Jesus Christ. Evangelical repentance, not self-consuming sorrow, *is* possible ; grace flows from the mercy-seat in the channel of Christ's finished work. 'All things are possible to him that believeth'—even salvation. Let me here believingly meditate on Heb. x., especially vers. 17-24. The question as between praying and fainting thus decided, let me ever remember it when 'my soul is cast down within me,' and when 'deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts.' Whatever those waterspouts be, they are Thine ; and herein lies at the same time the danger and the hope. O my soul, not unfrequently hast thou felt so utterly 'sore vexed,' afraid, and 'faded,' that prayer seemed to die on the lips and to be almost impossible,—until the Lord, by His Spirit, shone on some such declaration or promise as Rom. viii. 38, 39, and then the conflict seemed at once decided, and streams of grace were flowing through these blessed words, refreshing, watering, and reviving. Grace is the turning-point of despair—from me to Thee ; and then I am safe.

2. Therefore, however low I may sink, there is not a depth but grace goes still deeper. '*Underneath*' (still *underneath*; at whatever depth) 'are the everlasting arms.' 'The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.' For

the first time, and in the only sense, do I boast in the title—*lost*; and eagerly do I claim to write my own name in full between these four letters, which otherwise would have been covered by those of *hell*, but now are met by those of ‘seek’ and ‘save.’ Truly language cannot fully express what I am and what I deserve; yet tongue of man or angel cannot adequately tell or sing what Thou art and what Thou givest. ‘O to grace how great a debtor!’ Nor let me here forget devoted, grateful service in *acknowledgment*, though not in payment of the debt. With my sins I now dismiss my sorrows; and with my sorrows, my fears; and with my fears, mine enemies. I learn the doctrine of holy carelessness, which is being ‘careful for nothing’ (either for soul or for body, for time or for eternity), ‘but’ (and without that addition it were not the truth) ‘in *everything*, by prayer and supplication’ (sometimes rather by prayer, at others rather by supplication, but always) ‘with thanksgiving,’ letting our ‘requests be made known *unto God*.’

3. O my soul, thou mayest go as deep as this Psalm: thou canst not go deeper. Thou mayest overwhelmingly feel thyself *lost*: thou canst not go deeper. Christ is a *Saviour*: thou canst not go higher. This embraces thy full case, and meets it. ‘I will arise and go to my Father:’ there is the need, the warrant, and the assurance. I need no more. To ask more were unbelief. God requires no more. He has given Christ. Much as I have learnt about grace, it seems to me as if it were still towering so far aloft as to reach ‘unto the clouds’ (see Ps, xxxvi. 5-10). Remember, grace is God’s sufficiency in our insufficiency, God’s rich giving in our abject

poverty, God's coming in our tarrying, God's pouring forth in our emptiness. And grace is its own reason : give grace—for Thy grace's sake ! How precious, then, is the covenant of grace ; and even much more so the Mediator of that covenant, Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Saviour ! Lord, when I do not see, help me to believe ; let my soul, and the souls of those dear to me, and of all for whom I pray, be precious in Thy sight ; let them be bound up with Christ in the bundle of life.

SAFE home, safe home in port !—
Bent cordage, shattered deck,
Torn sails, provisions short,
And only not a wreck :
But oh ! the joy upon the shore
To tell our voyage-perils o'er !

The prize, the prize secure !
The athlete nearly fell ;
Bare all he *could* endure,
And bare not always well :
But he may smile at troubles gone
Who sets the victor-garland on !

S. JOSEPH OF THE STADIUM.
(*Hymns of the Eastern Church.*)

IX.

THE BETTER HOPE.

- 1 O LORD my God, in Thee do I put my trust : save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me :
- 2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.
- 3 O Lord my God, if I have done this ; if there be iniquity in my hands ;
- 4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me ; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy :)
- 5 Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it ; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.
- 6 Arise, O Lord, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies ; and awake for me to the judgment that Thou hast commanded.
- 7 So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about : for their sakes therefore return Thou on high.—PSALM VII.

A VERY sweet opening this of prayer, which, as all believing supplication, is not only a request for, but an anticipation of, help. 'Jehovah, my God, in Thee make I my refuge.' Amen : *thou hast* thy prayer and thy petition. There is such truth, comfort, and certainty in this mode of directly betaking one's-self to God, and resting in the shadow of His wings, that the believer frequently *opens* his prayers with what we would almost rather expect at their close.

‘This is true evidence of our faith,’ as Calvin observes, ‘when even in greatest trouble we continue to trust in *God*. Thence also we conclude that the door is shut against our prayers, if we open it not by the key of faith. Nor is it superfluous when he calls God *his* God, but he sets this as a dam against the waves of temptation, lest they should engulf his faith.’ Or, as another notes, ‘If we give God the glory, and seek no other support than Him on which to rest, He also causes us to experience that we require none other, but that He is more than sufficient.’ And it is remarkable that all such prayers end with assurance and praise (comp. Ps. xi., xvi., xxxi., lxxi.) Surely, I expect not the absence of danger and trouble ; but a ‘refuge,’ or the provision of safety and help, and that in Thee. So to make our refuge in Him is to believe. It is evident that such believing, or having not merely recourse to Him (which might imply the idea of an experiment), but making our shelter in Him, requireth no preparation, worthiness, nor fitness on our part. It only implies need, for which *He* has long ago made ample provision. And this is the sum and substance of the ‘glorious gospel’ of our blessed Lord.

The prayer, ‘Make me safe from all my persecutors, and deliver me’ (which in our terse Hebrew is expressed in just four words), is the proper application of believing assurance. To be certain of help in the day of battle, only makes me look for it all the more earnestly and steadily. Assurance leads to diligence and prayerfulness. Nor does it blind us to the sense of the greatness and nearness of our danger (ver. 2). There is nothing inconsistent with firm trust in thus looking

forth from our hiding-place. But at such seasons there is, and very properly, much holy jealousy about our cause and case. For God 'will not give His glory to another.' Periods of trial are such, not only in reference to faith and patience, but also to truth and purity. Trying times are searching times and purifying times ; and this is one of their main objects (vers. 3, 4). Help cannot be anticipated in connexion with sin, any more than with unbelief ; and it is in covenant mercy if we suffer here, that we may not be condemned hereafter. And here we also mark, what Luther calls 'the evangelical degree of righteousness,' and Calvin the evidence of 'the spirit of adoption,' in not requiting injuries, but overcoming evil with good (ver. 4).

But by far the most fearful anticipation of all is that of laying 'mine honour in the dust.' In its fullest acceptation this refers, if not to the loss, yet to the dishonour and desolation of the soul. For the expression 'glory' is frequently used for 'soul' (the soul being our real glory, and the reflection of the glory of God)—as in Ps. xvi. 9, xxx. 12, lvii. 8, cviii. 1 ; while the full meaning of laying 'in the dust' is illustrated in the prophecies and the history of Christ (Ps. xxii. 15).

Indeed, having struck, as it were, this keynote, it almost seems as if the Psalmist, in his undeserved persecution, were quite identifying himself with Him whose heart 'shame and reproach hath broken.' In the awful picture which is rapidly drawn, individual and general, present and future judgment seem almost to intermingle their terrors,—the thunders of the one being but the echo of those of the other. In (probably)

four irregular stanzas (vers. 6-9, 9-11, 11-14, and 14 to end), judgment and hope, destruction and assurance, are alternately traced. There is a majestic awe about the judgment,—weary saints and groaning earth inviting Jehovah, in the exercise of His holy ‘anger,’ to ‘rise up,’ in language similar to that of Moses’ prayer (Num. x. 35). In general there is a correspondence of thought and expression between the ‘rise up, Jehovah,’ and the ‘return, Jehovah’ of that prayer, and vers. 6, 7 of our Psalm: ‘Arise, Jehovah, in Thine anger;’ and again after judgment: ‘And over it’ (viz., the assembly or congregation of the nations) ‘return Thou on high.’ It almost seems as if here the prayer of Moses were mingled with the prophetic vision of the latter days. As Calvin remarks: ‘To the *fury of his enemies* he opposes the *wrath of God*. While the ungodly burn and throw out the flames of their rage, he entreats the Lord also to become hot.’ A more majestic picture of Jehovah’s sovereign power and glory could not be delineated than this: ‘Lift thyself up’ (or, show thyself in Thine upliftedness, greatness, and majesty—as in Ps. xciv. 2) ‘in the exceeding, overflowing, forth-passing, and forth-pressing rage’ (for all these ideas are implied in the term) ‘of those who press upon me, or persecute me.’ The wrath and persecutions of the enemies are like the rising tide, or like an overflowing flood, which slowly but surely breaking and passing its bounds, swells, and, approaching, threatens to engulf us. *In* this calamity (not *against* it) Jehovah merely shows himself: ‘Hitherto, but no further.’ This was true in reference to Christ: hitherto—to the cross, but not to the grave; and it is equally so in reference to all Christ’s people.

Passing from the particular to the general, he next sees, in prophetic vision, 'the gathering of the nations,' or the congregation of the nations (ver. 7), which are His saints, encompassing the Saviour-Judge, and 'over it' He returneth on high. As *Venema* paraphrases it : '*Universo coetu inspectante, cælum, unde descendisti, repete.*'

And this is not only most glorious but most comforting to weary saints. For as the promise of His coming is the pledge of all present needful help and deliverance, so is each particular judgment an earnest and anticipation of the final setting right of all things, and of the joy which this implies to the 'Lamb's bride.'

1. To make my refuge in God is the sum and substance of my faith. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the declaration of God that there is 'a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.' 'The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.' This is enough ; and faith betakes itself to Him and rests contented upon that assurance and provision. The simplicity of our faith consists in absolutely trusting ; the strength of our faith in implicitly resting. And what more could be required ? He has satisfied all the demands which law and justice can make upon us. He has opened a way into the holiest of all. He has conciliated to us the righteous favour of God, so that Jehovah is now our God. All that is left to me is to avail myself of the offer of His Holy Spirit, who receiveth of the things that are His and showeth them unto us. To hesitate were to question either His ability or His willingness. Doubts,

though seemingly concerning ourselves, are in reality concerning Him. Nothing so much glorifies God, because nothing so fully manifests the grace of God, as simply to give credence to the declaration of His love. Therefore let me come this day, and as I am ; let me come for refuge ; let me come as unto *my* God, who has become such by giving His own Son for me unto death.

2. How readily can He dissipate all our fears ! It needeth only that He *show* Himself in His greatness and glory, and the rising tide is stemmed and the overflowing flood pressed back. Our confidence therefore springs not so much from the removal of obstacles as from the manifestation of God. When, like Peter, we look to the wind and the waves, we speedily mark their rising, and, filled with fear, would perish, were it not for His interposition of grace. Saints are so often fearful, because spiritually so short-sighted. By grace, never let us calculate chances, but ever remember the living God. The enemy has the will but not the power to swallow us up. Yet here is our faith tried. In that strain and stress it seems as if every timber in the frail craft were creaking, and any defective part will certainly spring a leak. Sin is our weakness as well as our misery. The waters will enter in where sin has made a way for them. Hence times of trial, or rather times of expected help, are times of self-examination and sanctification. We never loathe sin more than when we feel shut up to God and alone with Him. Then most do we feel that inward separation from all sin, and that determined renouncing of it, which is always conjoined with simple cleaving to Christ. That alone is a

spiritually sanctified trial which shuts us up to Christ, and empties us of self. It is not a real trial of our faith so long as we have, or hope for, any help out of Him. It is not really sanctified until it lead us mourning as well as rejoicing to the Lord our help. And then how calm are we while waiting, and how humble and joyous when delivered !

3. What a blessed and glorious prospect is this of 'the gathering of the nations,' of the congregation of His saints ! On earth, and in the present dispensation, let us not look for the one and indivisible Church of Christ. Thoughts of it are like the chime of distant bells, borne upon the breeze to the ear of the weary pilgrim. *We* have Churches and *He* has a Church ; and when He cometh, will He not only manifest His own and His Father's glory, but also the beauty and the unity of His Church ? Carnal men, who judge by sight, seek even in their carnal faith for an outward unity. Yet we remember that this is the time for believing, not for seeing ; for inward experience, not for outward manifestation. And when the Lord cometh, the day shall break, and the shadows flee away. Amen. So teach us to love Thine appearing and to wait for it !

WHEN the Lord recalls the banish'd,
Frees the captives all at last,
Every sorrow will have vanish'd
Like a dream when night is past ;
Then shall all our hearts rejoice,
And with glad resounding voice
We shall praise the Lord who sought us,
For the freedom He hath wrought us.

BÜRDE.
(*Lyra Germanica.*)

E

X.

VICTORY AND REST.

- 8 THE LORD shall judge the people ! Judge me, O Lord,
According to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in
me.
- 9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end ; but establish the just !
For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.
- 10 My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.
- 11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.
- 12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword ; he hath bent his bow, and made it
ready.
- 13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death ;
He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.
- 14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity,
And hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.
- 15 He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.
- 16 His mischief shall return upon his own head,
And his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.
- 17 I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness ;
And will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high.—PSALM VII.

MOST awful as the prospect of judgment is,—whether particular or general, the one being the anticipation of the other,—there are times when it almost seems to be the comfort of our hearts. Having given ourselves to the Lord, and washed away our sins in His precious blood, we also commit ourselves unto Him in welldoing. Surrounded by enemies,

when evil spoken of, persecuted, or forsaken, we feel as if we were all the happier for having none other on our side than the 'Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.' His is not merely the friendship of choice and intimacy, nor the relationship established by His incarnation, but a friendship closer, more continuous, and efficacious far than any earthly ties. We *know* in whom we have believed, and are well assured that He will keep that which we have committed unto Him to the end. Therefore, while looking forward with intensity of hope to that judgment, which in reality is the public proclamation of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, we can, though deeply conscious of our guilt, yet fully trusting in His grace and power, add, 'Judge me, O Jehovah; according to my righteousness and mine integrity *upon me*' (*not* 'in me,' as in our version), ver. 8. At the same time let us ever remember that it is not only 'according to my righteousness,' but also 'according to mine integrity' or uprightness,—'that they which have believed in God might be *careful* to maintain good works.' To be 'upright' in Christ implies entire and thorough heart-and-life dedication. Nothing tends more to break up our peace and to deprive us of our strength than any compromise with the world. Our spiritual man may suffer grievously by breathing a poisoned atmosphere, even though life itself be not extinguished. We may feel destitute of the sense of spiritual 'integrity,'—of oneness of aim and life,—and so go mourning many a day, in view of those very realities which at one time had been our hope and joy. In full accordance with these views are the prayer of ver. 9 and the assurance of ver. 10. The cessation of evil,—the conversion

rather than the destruction of sinners,—and with it the establishment of the just, must be the object of our desire, even as it is the consequence of *His* holiness and righteousness who trieth hearts and reins. All falsehood and evil, even in His own people, are brought to the light of His countenance, and cannot stand before Him who is ‘of purer eyes than to behold evil.’ *We* are prone to hate the wicked, and to love, or at least to tolerate, wickedness; *He* compassionates and offers mercy to the wicked, but puts an end to all wickedness. And then, in full apprehension of His mercy and judgment, the soul rises to this joyous assurance, ‘My shield is upon God, the Saviour of the upright in heart.’ Ah, how difficult is it to be alike earnest and charitable, and charitable and holy! It needs both a sense of sin and experience of grace to be kept both humble and pure. Yet only thus can we cherish the confidence of ver. 10.

The ultimate destruction of sinners is not an act of vengeance; it is the necessary manifestation of the character of Jehovah (ver. 11). Believers know, and all men will have to acknowledge, the righteousness and long-suffering mercy of our God. ‘God angrily threatens every day’ (for so we would render ver. 10, the original meaning of the expression being ‘to boil up’). By His word, and even in His Providence, He leaves no doubt what must be the ultimate consequence of sin. Yet even thus He opens a door of hope in the midst of the most awful denunciations of judgment to come. ‘If he turn not,’—if he does not return or be converted,—‘He will whet His sword.’ The preciousness of the bare possibility of return on the part of a guilty, perish-

ing sinner, cannot be realized by any who has not experienced it. All around me, frowning and threatening, are God's judgments. His Word condemns me, and my own conscience assents to the justice of this doom. Yet there is hope: He waiteth, and waiteth not merely to execute sentence, but 'to be gracious.' Therefore I may pray. There is an open way. This is perhaps realized long before the apparently similar and yet different truth—that this way is open *to me*. But the mere fact that there is an open way, is like the rending of the clouds. To discover it is to enter on the way of peace. How precious is this Jesus—this man once to us also without form, comeliness, or beauty—when the soul is convinced of its guilt and need! If any sinner has been saved, and that by grace alone, why may not *I* go to the throne of grace, and to Him who is *full* of grace? To save me only needs that *fulness* of grace which is treasured up in Christ. And then, '*Him* that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' Ever let us cherish these words, 'If he turn not.' In the midst of threatenings they seem all the more reassuring. For sometimes, under a sense of sin, a man may derive more help and comfort from such negative promises (as I would term them), than even from the richest assurances, which at the time the soul seems unable to receive as personally applicable.

And then, after having wide opened the door of mercy to one and all, the Psalm closes amid the lurid light of coming judgment, in which, though distantly yet distinctly, are still heard the praises of His redeemed people. There, and more than ever *there*, the covenant-faithfulness of our Saviour shall

appear, when the Son shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father, and it shall have become fully true, 'Those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost,'—to the glory of sovereign grace.

1. Even though savingly turned from sin unto God, let me, in the light of the judgment-day, view the nature and consequences of sin. Its folly and wickedness are alike apparent. For while it is 'iniquity' (ver. 14), the word also signifies 'nothingness,' a mere 'breath' that passes away. Again, the term 'mischief' primarily means labour and trouble; and the fruit of all is 'falsehood.' The enemy of souls deceives while he destroys. Let me be more fully on my guard as to the *deceptive* character of sin. Alas! how often have I experienced it, and yet how prone am I to be still and daily led astray! Consider, my soul, from what awful destruction thou hast been delivered, and art daily delivered, by free and sovereign grace. And how earnestly does it become thee to watch and pray! The approach of sin is as slow as it is deceptive. Let me beware of mingling more than is needed in the way of duty, or for His service, with the world and the men of the world. A weakened frame is not likely to resist disease; a lowered spiritual tone exposes me to all the virulence of sin. O to keep close to God; to *walk* in the Spirit, as we live in the Spirit!

2. Would that I could more fully live in view of that great day, when the Lord shall take unto Himself the kingdom! Surely I feel it that nothing less will suffice to set right the wrongs of this present state of things. What a bright and glorious prospect this, to keep the heart fresh, warm, and

hopeful ! Every token of evil then would become an outcry, a groan : ' Arise, O Lord.' All, all must hasten on Thy blessed kingdom. This assurance will support us when the vague and foolish dreams of mere worldly improvement fail. But if the coming of the Lord be indeed at hand, what manner of man ought I to be,—how to conduct myself towards them that are without, how to redeem the time, and how to trade with the talents committed to my stewardship ! Through the vista of this day let me look forward to the day which has no night : my present hope will give place to sight ; my present experience, how limited, compared with the reality ! Meantime, let me in *every sense*, both so far as I and as others are concerned, occupy till *He* come.

3. Yet withal will I '*trust*.' This is to be the innermost and uppermost feeling of my heart. Come what may ; arise who can ; persecute who dare ; fail whatever is of flesh and even of heart,—O Jehovah, Thou art *my* God, my Father, my Redeemer ; ' in Thee do I put my trust.' To Thee have I committed myself for time and for eternity, soul and body. I am Thine. Though faintly and weakly, yet in ' integrity' would I cleave to Thee and serve Thee. Lord, save me for Thine own name's sake ; and in this confidence will I go forward. Amen.

PRAISE, honour, thanks, to Thee be brought,
For all things in and for me wrought
By Thy great mercy, Christ.
This one thing only still I pray,
Oh cast me ne'er from Thee away.

HANS SACHS.
(*Lyra Germanica.*)

XI.

CREATION AND REDEMPTION.

- 1 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth !
Who hast set thy glory above the heavens.
- 2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength
Because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the
avenger.
- 3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained ;
- 4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man, that thou
visitest him ?
- 5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,
And hast crowned him with glory and honour.
- 6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands ;
Thou hast put all things under his feet ;
- 7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field ;
- 8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
And whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.
- 9 O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth !—PSALM VIII.

A SWEET song this for the night season, alike literally and spiritually considered. The infinite condescension of the great Jehovah, the glory of our God, the high calling of men as realized in and through Christ, and the devout praises of His people, are its exalted theme. Nor is it merely individual experience which here finds expression ; it is the song of the Church, as appears from the opening words, ‘O

Jehovah *our* Lord.' For however our views and feelings may differ, in this are we all agreed—to ascribe unto Him all honour, glory, and praise: 'How excellent' (strong, splendid) 'is Thy name in all the earth!' The first and strongest feeling is that of wonderment and adoration. Look wherever we may,—over 'the whole earth,'—it seems as if the chorus rose from all His creatures, animate and inanimate; as if one truth were reflected by all creation,—the might and glory of Him who is Jehovah and our Lord, our covenant God and almighty King. And what reason have *we* to say this, who have experienced His gracious power, and His powerful grace! And as yet, the kingdoms of this world have not become the kingdoms of our Lord. What when the whole earth shall be filled with His glory! It is not devout nor Christian to take a gloomy or morose view of matters. True, there is no light in the creature; but the Lord is the glory of them. A world without God were force without object; mere force, terrible but not beautiful. But a world which, like a glass, though dimmed, reflects His brightness, must be beautiful. To see God in the world, and the world as in God, is true philosophy and true theology. These are God's heavens; this is God's earth, God's sun, moon, and stars; and I am not only one of His creatures, but His own child. To read the book of nature properly, we must first learn the language of Canaan, in which its lessons and secrets are written. Wretched indeed were he who could go through the world without God! Yet is it not in nature to lead up to 'nature's God.' Hers is but the silvery light of the moon, or the trembling brightness of the stars, by

which I cannot read those truths which are revealed in His Word. Since the Fall, we read nature only by night-light.

Yet all the more wonderful is His condescension 'to men of low estate.' His glory is in the heavens; His might is founded upon earth in 'the mouth of babes and sucklings.' These are the bulwarks which He opposes to 'the enemy and the revengeful.' His kingdom needeth not material force nor mighty defenders. 'Children and babes' form the outworks of His 'city.' The very terms are significant—the word 'child' ('babe' in our version) being probably derived from the idea of playfulness, and that of 'babe,' or suckling, giving the idea of an infant which has just *begun* to articulate. O my soul, when wilt thou learn this, and be contentedly acquiescing in it: 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord'? Our distrusts and fears are the offspring of unbelief. So far as we individually are concerned, 'when I am weak, then am I strong.' Similarly with reference to His kingdom, whether in reference to its establishment, its progress, or its defence. If we are God's children, He will ever teach us this lesson, perhaps by painful experiences. So often as I lean on man, or hope for good from anything here, let me bless God if all gives way under me. But let me look upward and see the fringes of His mantle of glory on the heavens, and what joyful confidence fills my heart! Christ was a babe, and lay weak and seemingly powerless in the manger. The children of Jerusalem brought their hosanna to heaven's King—the only hosanna which His royal city offered Him. And still, 'out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast ordained strength.'

But what a contrast between heaven and earth, between the magnitude of the one and the seeming insignificance of the other! 'When I consider *Thy* heavens, the workmanship of *Thy* fingers, the moon' (or, as the term means, 'the night-wanderer') 'and the stars' (or, 'the round, spherical bodies') 'which *Thou* hast formed' (set up or constructed and placed), then, truly, how small is man! But the question which would seem to raise our unbelief, also for ever silences it. For God '*remembereth* him,' though he be only 'man' (the term being probably derived from 'frail'), and '*visiteth*,' or looketh upon, careth for him, though he be but 'the son of man'—weak, powerless, and passing away. O that we could in some measure realize these precious truths! Miserably small and impotent though man be, God *remembereth* and *visiteth* him. And when God remembereth, He looketh down upon and careth for us. The merest speck in God's universe becomes a precious speck—a jewel—when God looketh upon it.

Comforting as all this is, it necessarily implies and presupposes Christ. Hence ver. 5, which was true of man as he came from the hand of God, is only really fulfilled in Christ himself, and through Christ in redeemed humanity. Most aptly is it therefore applied to the Lord, the second Adam, the true Man, the Head of redeemed humanity, in such a passage as Heb. ii. 6-8. For what was originally intended in reference to humanity, and what in all its fulness applies to redeemed humanity, has been brought to pass in Christ and through Christ. The image of God, defaced by sin, has been exhibited in Christ and by Christ; the dominion lost

by the fall has been restored in the Saviour and through the Saviour. Nay, in their literal application, vers. 5-9 apply only to Christ and to His new creation. 'Made a little lower than *Elohim*,' He, and they in Him, have been '*crowned* with glory and honour.' The sway which Jesus exercised upon earth is not only that of the Son of God, but of the God-man. No doubt, in 'the world to come,'—on ransomed and restored earth—Christ's people will also exercise dominion. There will be no discord; but even as humanity will welcome and own its Lord, so earth her heaven-appointed lord and master. Yet would we remember *two* things in connexion with this blessed prospect. On the one hand, we observe the present dissonance introduced by sin, when man owns not his God, and creation disowns her lord. Blessed be His name that this dissonance shall be resolved in the day of His coming. Again, how intensely true has it become, beyond what probably Old Testament saints could have hoped when they saw the day of Christ afar off: 'Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honour;' 'Thou hast put all things under His feet' (1 Cor. xv. 27). What a series of glorious realities here opens to our minds! And—'*if sons, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.*' Truly may the Church add, by way of joyous Amen: 'O Jehovah, *our Lord*, how excellent is Thy name upon all the earth!'

1. Let me daily remember that the 'reproach of Christ' has not ceased. Not only must '*all* that will live godly in Christ Jesus suffer persecution,' each in his own way, but 'Christ crucified' and the whole dispensation of grace is 'to the Jews a stumblingblock and unto the Greeks foolishness.'

Nor do I require to go out of myself to hear such objections raised. Even the glorious works of God, so far from leading to devout acknowledgment and adoration of our Father in Christ, through the alienation and unbelief of our hearts, too often only raise doubting questions. 'This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.' But of what infinite value is each soul, created in His own image, and destined to reflect His glory throughout eternity! God *has* condescended to us—to *me*. Then, when by faith I have grasped the truth as it is in Jesus, let me look up to Thy heavens, and around upon all the workmanship of thy fingers. This God is *our* God; this power, wisdom, and goodness are treasured up for us in the fulness of grace which is in Jesus. The Church of God should hear the anthem of creation (Ps. viii. 1-3), and respond to it in the language of confession (ver. 4), of blessed faith (ver. 5), of expectant hope (vers. 6-8), and of praise (ver. 9).

2. This is one of our great temptations—to expect spiritual results from visible and ponderable means. Men, money, influence, talents,—how do we trust in them, and how prone are we to attach undue value to them! 'Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?' Yet with every new antichristian movement (whether in the direction of unbelief or misbelief) how much am I moved!—every man of talent or wealth or station who declares or acts against Christ, what 'dread!' And how sadly do we decline, under the influence of such feelings, from the simplicity of our faith; how prone are we, like Barnabas of old, to be 'carried away with their dissimulation!' Nothing

is more sad than the man-and-mammon worship even of believers. There is only one remedy for this grievous distemper—to look up *straight* to God in Christ, and to realize that the work, the word, and the power, are alike His. It depends in no way upon *man* ; all comes directly from Thee. Thus alone shall my heart be comforted and established.

3. But if this great God be thy God, O my soul, how safely canst thou repose ! Rest, for the Master liveth and reigneth. We believe in God, we believe also in Thee. Thou whose word has called forth these worlds, whose fingers have framed these heavens, knowest us, rememberest us, visitest us, lovest us, carest for us. It is enough ; our Joseph is alive. ‘All things are yours ; whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ’s ; and Christ is God’s.’ This is our Father’s provision, the lot of our inheritance and the portion of our cup, for ever.

HE came in weakness, comes in power,
His glory yet hath its full hour,
Wheu in the blue meridian
The sun shall fade, grow cold and wan ;
When brighter, keener lightnings play,
And blaze into the Judgment-day,
O King of Glory, thus again
Art Thou to come, the Judge of men.

Hymnologia Christiana.

XII.

GRACIOUS REMEMBRANCE.

- 1 I WILL praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart ;
I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.
- 2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee : I will sing praise to thy name, O thou
Most High.
- 3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy pre-
sence.
- 4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause ; thou satest in the throne
judging right.
- 5 Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked,
Thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.
- 6 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end !
And thou hast destroyed cities ; their memorial is perished with them.
- 7 But the Lord shall endure for ever ; he hath prepared his throne for judg-
ment ;
- 8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness,
He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.
- 9 The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.
- 10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee :
For thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.
- 11 Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion : declare among the people
his doings.
- 12 When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them :
He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.
- 13 Have mercy upon me, O Lord ; consider my trouble which I suffer of them
that hate me,
Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death ;
- 14 That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion !
I will rejoice in thy salvation.

- 15 The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made :
In the net which they hid is their own foot taken.
- 16 The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth :
The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higaion. Selah.
- 17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.
- 18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten :
The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.
- 19 Arise, O Lord ; let not man prevail ; let the heathen be judged in thy sight.
- 20 Put them in fear, O Lord ; that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.—PSALM IX.

HOWEVER the Psalms may differ, in this they agree, that every one of them contains utterances of joy, for each anticipates victory and deliverances from the Lord. We may have to descend into the valley of humiliation, but we shall be brought forth with the voice of praise and thanksgiving ; for ours is not the sorrow of the world, which worketh death. What a blessed covenant-God is ours ! how merciful in all His dealings ; how faithful in all His leadings ! In all things and at all times we can implicitly trust Him. Hence, if one resolve is more settled than another in the renewed soul, it is to praise Him ‘with the *whole* heart.’ Let us remember that all is done and finished for us : nothing, therefore, is left but to ‘*praise* Thee, O Jehovah!’ The salvation of our souls—alike the forgiveness of sins, the sanctification of the heart, and final perseverance—are secured by what Christ has already done, and Thou hast already accepted.

Nor can ours be merely the praise of the lips : it is that of the heart, and of the ‘whole heart’ (ver. 1). ‘The love of Christ constraineth us ;’ ‘we love Him because He first loved us.’ And such love engrosses the whole heart ; it also leads

to corresponding action: 'I will show forth all Thy marvellous works.' Henceforth this theme must wholly occupy us, and form the object of our lives (vers. 1, 2). A child of God is of necessity a missionary. If others speak well of what they love, how can we otherwise than 'show forth' all His 'marvellous works?' Besides, our deliverances are not all over and past; they are daily renewed. We breathe an atmosphere of miracles, and move in a path which shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. We believe, not merely because *He saw* us under the fig-tree—marvel of grace though this was—but because we still 'see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.' Our enemies, which are His also, 'are turned back.' It needs no visible weapons to destroy them. God sends not an army and horsemen to destroy Herod in the hour of his pride. The worms will suffice for it. And this is a marked characteristic of such dispensations, that when He beginneth, He maketh a full end with His enemies. When they 'are turned back, they shall fall and perish at Thy presence.' Observe, in history and in Providence, this distinction—while the heathen are *rebuked* (whether so far as their persons or the heathen element is concerned), the wicked are *destroyed*, and their very name, remembrance, achievements, and undertakings, are brought to a perpetual end (vers. 4-7). How calmly and patiently may we look on! (ver. 7.) It is as if we emerged from a stifled atmosphere into sweet, pure summer air; it is as if we escaped from storm and wreck to some quiet, landlocked haven of rest. 'But the Lord shall endure for *ever*.' There is here a very noteworthy inference.

From the dealings of Jehovah we rise to a view of His character. History teaches doctrine, and Providence points to grace. These two, indeed, illustrate each other. From His Word I learn to know His working, and from His working I learn to understand His Word. In one sense all history is Christian ; for the government is on His shoulder. History either prepares the way *for* Christ, or the way *of* Christ. And what a glorious assurance, that amidst all upheavings, 'nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure.' How fully, then, may I trust my cares, wants, and difficulties to Him ! That which is awful to the sinner is the ground of my confidence. His faithfulness and truth, His righteousness and strength, are all arrayed on the side of His people (vers. 9, 10). The truths about God, which strike terror into the heart of the world, bring sweetest comfort to the Church. 'And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee : for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.'

O my soul, what more than this couldest thou require ? It reacheth to the highest height, and descendeth to the lowest depth ; it extendeth to heaven, and cometh down to the dust. If we know Thy blessed name, O our Jesus, Thy love and Thy power, we will rest on Thee, both calmly and safely, till these calamities be overpast. And if I am not conscious of trust ; if darkness gather around my mind, and sadness sit on my heart—Lord, *Thou* hast not (*Thou never canst and never hast*) forsaken them that seek Thee, nor any one of them. If I cannot hold, I am holden ; if I have not conscious faith, Thou hast faithfulness. The more I look out

of myself and to Him, the more entirely I forget myself and remember Him ; the more simple my faith is—not studying its own actings so much as Him and His grace and power—the more peace and cause for praise shall I have (ver. 11). Such experience will find a way outward. There is, so to speak, a propelling character in the experience of grace. ‘We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.’ Excessive prudence is sometimes excessive coldness, fear of men, and want of realizing faith. ‘Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul.’ Let us also remember that it is the special commission of the Lord, the special mission of the Church, to ‘declare among the nations His doings,’ or *magnalia*, ‘and,’ as Calvin has it, ‘even though this be like preaching to deaf ears.’ Answers to prayer may be delayed for a time, at least so far as outward manifestations (not the inward feeling of peace and security) are concerned. They will, however, certainly come, and that, perhaps, in times of judgment to the world (ver. 12). ‘He *remembereth* them,’ long after their prayer has ascended ; ‘He *forgetteth not* the cry of the humble,’ long after the event which had called it forth has passed away. On these Divine facts the believer rests his petition and his hope. Thus vers. 13, 14 embody the prayer of the undeserving through Christ, his felt need, the plea of experienced salvation (‘Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death’), and the grand object of glorifying God and rejoicing in Him (ver. 14). Such expectations *cannot* be put to shame nor perish (ver. 18). In His long-suffering and patience the Lord waiteth long, and waiteth to be gracious. But how

awful will be His manifestation, when He adjusteth the balance of His moral government, and 'is known' in view of all His universe 'by the judgment which He executeth! That sad and strange '*quid pro quo*,' as one calls it, which is indicated in the terms of the original, 'let not man prevail,' or be strong—the word for 'man' being derived from the verb 'to be weak'—will cease when the Lord shall come. Then shall we be found safe—safe in the clefts of *the Rock*,—till the storm that shatters the rocks, and the earthquake which shakes the mountains, and the awful fire that lights up that night, are past. Till the morning breaks, we feed among the lilies!

1. 'Yet a little while,'—God's 'little while,' not mine. Then shall all be adjusted, all put to right; order come out of seeming confusion, light out of darkness, and life out of death. May I not be content to wait with the Master in the ship? Only believe: *all* things are possible to him that believeth. Let me look around. Oh, what change will take place, and what beauty, when the Lord createth all things anew! And of this we *have* already both the assurance and the first-fruits in the covenant of grace.

2. I have got, so to speak, four handles by which to lay hold on this Psalm; four steps by which to reach its topmost branches, and shake the olives from its boughs. Thy power and work are my joy (vers. 1, 2); Thyself and Thy name my refuge (vers. 9, 10); Thy mercy my salvation (vers. 13, 14); and Thy faithfulness my hope and confidence (vers. 18, 19).

3. 'None shall pluck them out of My hand;' and, by grace, none shall pluck this out of my hand. I will make ver. 10

my bed of *rest*. Truly it is a perfect verse. Often have I, in times past, experienced its sweetness and truth. When driven from one clause, I have fled to the other ; and from this last, the *seeking* of Thee, my God in Christ, none can drive me. Whatever else I am or do, I will seek Thee. 'How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God ; therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings.' Though I be the vilest, the weakest, and the lowest of Thy people, Thy love and Thy grace condescend to me ; nor can I find 'stronger consolation' than this of verse 10. Amen. Even so let it be with me, both to-day and for ever !

THE trials that beset you,
The sorrows ye endure,
The manifold temptations
That Death alone can cure,—

What are they, but His jewels
Of right celestial worth ?
What are they but the ladder
Set up to heaven on earth ?

O happy band of pilgrims !
Look upward to the skies,
Where such a light affliction
Shall win you such a prize !

S. JOSEPH OF THE STADIUM.
(*Hymns of the Eastern Church.*)

XIII.

FAITH AND PATIENCE.

- 1 WHY standest thou afar off, O Lord ? why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble ?
- 2 The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor :
Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.
- 3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire,
And blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.
- 4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God :
God is not in all his thoughts.
- 5 His ways are always grievous ; thy judgments are far above out of his sight :
As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.—PSALM X.

THIS is one of the nine alphabetical Psalms (though not without some irregularities—the other eight being Ps. ix., xxv., xxxiv., xxxvii., cxi., cxii., cxix., and cxlv.), and one of the two in the first book of the Psalter (Ps. i.-xli.) which have no inscription (the other being Ps. xxxiii.) Still, as the difference of subject shows, Ps. x. must be looked upon as rather a sequel than a continuation of Ps. ix. It is an earnest cry of the Church for deliverance ; as it were, the Old Testament cry of the souls under the altar. Such, alas ! frequently recur. For at all times, even when David was King of Israel, was the Church a small, despised, and persecuted people.

Her strength lay in spreading her case before God, and expectantly looking up. Thus alone she solved by faith the great mystery of Providence, and conquered, by converting what was matter of complaint into matter of praise—having first converted it into matter of prayer. For Christ 'is our peace.' The shadow of Christ falling upon us *is* peace. That such peace is indissolubly joined with constant prayer, appears from Phil. iv. 7, in connexion with ver. 6.

The spiritual frankness with which the Psalm opens (ver. 1), is one of the many signs of the sonship of its writer. For nothing more clearly marks our absolute confidence than to bring our questions to Him, instead of attempting to answer or to suppress them. Very certainly there is but one solution for all such difficulties—to be lifted above them, and to have a clear and bright view of the glorious prospect set before us in His Word. Yet the same objection still often recurs in our experience. The '*why*' of Jehovah standing at a distance—hiding, concealing, covering himself in times of pressure and anguish (for that is the idea conveyed)—forms the subject of anxious inquiry, which indeed is answered by that inquiry itself. For all these things will He be inquired of by the house of Israel. Then follows the outpouring of the anguished heart, and too faithful a description of the conduct, motives, and views of the enemy (vers. 2-11). 'In the pride' (or upliftedness) 'of the wicked, the poor' (or suffering) 'becomes burning.' Let us here bear in mind the commentary in 1 Pet. iv. 12, and again, in i. 7, 8. Nay, it even seems that the poor 'are caught in the devices which they have imagined' (for so the expression should be rendered).

Daring pursuit of sin, blasphemy, and practical atheism are always conjoined (vers. 3, 4). 'For the wicked boasteth of' (or rather, loudly praiseth) 'the desire' (or lust) 'of his soul ; and the covetous blesseth' (perhaps 'blasphemeth' ?) ; 'he despiseth or scoffeth at Jehovah' (the original idea being 'to prick ;' hence perhaps 'he provoketh Jehovah'). Self-indulgence and covetousness are practical atheism. Yet how prone are we to forget this ! O my soul, think of what Jesus has done for thee, when He made Himself of no reputation ; think of the cross ; think of thine own high and holy calling ; 'flee lusts ;' and beware of covetousness. Remember its presence in the professing Church is one of the signs of the last days (2 Tim. iii. 2 ; 2 Pet. ii. 3). It is a sin against which the Lord specially warns us (Luke xii. 15) ; and of which the ministry of Christ is in peculiar danger (1 Tim. iii. 3). And how awfully true is the summary which Scripture gives of the plans of such sinners ! 'The wicked, through the pride of his countenance' (literally, 'in the exaltedness of his nose'), '*saith*, He will not seek it out ! There is no God ; this all his imagining' (the sum and substance of his plans and actings). What a picture of the men of the world, who are 'without God in the world !' 'And such were some of you : *but* ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' In view of our proneness to all this, let us bear in mind the admonition : 'All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient ; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.'

1. To how many of our doubting and foolish questions does the rebuke of the Lord to Peter apply, 'What is that to thee? Follow thou me!' When we examine many of the difficulties from without which seem to beset or threaten our Christian course, it will be found that the secret of their influence lies in reality within us. Of many of them it may be said, *They concern us not*. They concern the Master. Of others, it is true, that *they affect us not*, either as to our safety or as to our duty, while in their nature, certainly, *they hinder us not*. We take many burdens upon ourselves, which in the heat of the day we feel sore and grievous; and which in our weariness at last we learn to lay down, wondering why we had ever taken them up. Among them, perhaps, the most common are needless questions. A needless question is a needless difficulty. Where *our own* path is plain, what matters to us that of another? Where our own call is clear, why stop to ask about that of our neighbour? Yet is there only one effectual remedy to all this: to be so absorbed in following the Lord ourselves as to have neither leisure nor inclination left to think of aught else. Painfully do we know how often an event in Providence, or the course of our fellow-Christians, their inconsistencies, or their seeming presumption, distract and divert our minds, and paralyse our energies. At such seasons, Lord, let me in Thy grace hear Thy voice: 'What is that to thee?' Whenever any supposed or real hindrance occurs, or whenever any 'why' concerning the ways of God presses upon my heart—let me ask myself: How does it affect my case? Does it alter my duty, make it easier or more difficult? Can it prevent my salvation or hinder my work for

Christ? And this one thing help me to do, ever to follow Thee implicitly and exclusively!

2. 'All things' must 'work together for good to them that love Him,' and among these 'all things' notably *trials* of our faith and patience. It is not the pride of the wicked nor the suffering of the poor; it is not even the seeming triumphs of sinners, nor their boasting and blasphemy; but the standing afar of Jehovah which tries our faith. We have given up the visible, and we account as nothing appearances which, we have long been taught, are deceptive. But now the *invisible* also seems to fail us, and we have to realize the unutterable wretchedness implied in that hypothetical case: 'If Christ be not risen, then are we of all men most miserable.' In His infinite compassion to our weakness, He who knoweth our frame oftentimes allows not our faith to be so tested. Yet are there such seasons, when it almost seems as if we must go up alone to offer up that in which all our hopes were bound up. Yet, with reverence be it said, God *cannot* forsake His believing people. Much more stable than any of those natural laws by which the worlds are kept circling in their spheres are the principles of the covenant of grace. 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' But He will not allow thee to be slain; He will only teach thee to trust Him more absolutely and more implicitly, and thus will He only give thee more comfort because more faith. And in our weakness let us go to Him to tell Him of our doubts. To lay our case before Him is to be already relieved. The burden which I have rolled upon Him can no longer bear me down; it has ceased to be *my* burden.

3. Yet ever let me remember my liability to *all* sin, and my proneness to *besetting* sin. And with reference to some sins, the usages of society and the common opinion of men have rendered us so familiar with them as to remove their edge. Whenever and wherever a sin is very widely indulged in, even believers seem to lose their intense sensibility concerning it. The atmosphere which they breathe has become so poisoned as to influence their system. And of all sins, covetousness perhaps is the most generally prevalent in our days. It holds not only the world in bondage, but it has affected the Church. Let me examine my views, feelings, wishes, and hopes in this respect. Lord, I *know* it : he is rich who has treasure laid up in heaven ; he is influential who has Thee on his side. But I want to *feel* it more. Help me by Thy grace. Infuse into my heart such a sense of Thy sufficiency as will lift me far above the world. Gladden me with such a sense of Thy presence as will satisfy me. Reveal Thyself, blessed Jesus, in Thy love and in Thy glory, that knowing Thee I may not know any man after the flesh. Fill us with Thyself and there will not be room for the world. Thyself, and only Thyself, art the balm of Gilead and the Physician there. I ask for more of Thyself—and in Thee I have all !

HE is in God, and God in him,
Who still abides in love ;
'Tis love that makes the Cherubim
Obey and praise above ;
For God is love : the loveless heart
Hath in His life and joy no part.

GELLERT.
(*Lyra Germanica.*)

XIV.

CONFIDENCE.

- 4 THE wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God :
God is not in all his thoughts.
- 5 His ways are always grievous ; thy judgments are far above out of his sight :
As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.
- 6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved : for I shall never be in adversity.
- 7 His mouth is full of cursing, and deceit, and fraud ;
Under his tongue is mischief and vanity.
- 8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages :
In the secret places doth he murder the innocent :
His eyes are privily set against the poor.
- 9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den :
He lieth in wait to catch the poor : he doth catch the poor when he draweth
him into his net.
- 10 He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.
- 11 He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten : he hideth his face ; he will
never see it.
- 12 Arise, O Lord ; O God, lift up thine hand : forget not the humble.
- 13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God ?
He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.
- 14 Thou hast seen it ; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to require it with
thy hand :
The poor committeth himself unto thee ; thou art the helper of the fatherless.
- 15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man :
Seek out his wickedness till thou find none.
- 16 The Lord is King for ever and ever : the heathen are perished out of his land.
- 17 Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble :
Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear :
- 18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed,
That the man of the earth may no more oppress. —PSALM X.

WHEN we lay to heart the patience and long-suffering of our Lord with sinners, how sad and how strange that, instead of leading them to repentance, it should only give rise to false security and confidence in their minds. Accordingly (ver. 5), 'his ways are persistent' (they hold out, are not turned upside down) 'at all times; most highly distant are Thy judgments from before him: as for all His enemies, He puffeth' (or bloweth) 'at them.' Continuance in prosperity is a grievous snare to the ungodly. Everything seems to go well with them; and as for the twofold check of God's judgments and of their own opponents, the one is far removed out of their sight, and the other they despise. 'He saith in heart, I shall by no means shake: from generation to generation *I am he* who is not in evil.' Yet let me not think that I am free from all danger of such carnal confidence. To attach undue value to *any* earthly advantage; to put trust in riches, or even to desire them, is to display confidence in the flesh. I am none the more secure for having that which the world covets as its chief good, but perhaps all the less safe. Under the influence of such passions all means seem lawful (vers. 7-10). It almost appears as if the world applied its trite and wretched proverb about 'no friendship in business' to all Christian principle, work, and duty. They will unhesitatingly do that which is oppressive, vile, and cruel, and perhaps represent it as needful or common in the way of their calling. No calling can be of God which does not include the highest and holiest principles of Christianity, which does not allow room for their manifestation, or in which I cannot glorify God. The saying of our Lord must apply in all

its force to our daily walk and conversation, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.' Never let us attempt that sinful separation between our religious and our common duties. 'For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.' In reality, there can be no such unholy separation. The leaven of the gospel must leaven the whole lump. The fundamental principle of Christianity—He 'loved me, and gave Himself for me'—equally applies to justification (Gal. ii. 20) and to sanctification (Eph. v. 20). And what an awful summary of practical irreligion has not the Lord set before us in ver. 11: 'He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: He hideth His face; He will never see it!' God forbid that this be the inscription placed upon our lives! Yet how many times may it be said of us that *we* at least have forgotten, and hide our face and see it not! Viewing all things in the light of eternity, what solemn import attaches to our every action!

Most appropriately is this description followed by the earnest pleading of the Church (vers. 12, 13). For the Church neither hath nor requireth other weapons than those of faith and prayer. She turns, as it were, instinctively to the Lord, and converts the blasphemies of her persecutors into prayer. Even thus the wrath of men shall praise Him. It offers fresh cause and fresh ground for His manifestation. But here appeareth 'the patience' of His saints. Rising by faith above present appearances to the spiritual reality, we know that 'Thou *hast* seen, for *Thou wilt* consider trouble and sorrow to put it into Thine hand; to Thee the helpless will commit himself; of the orphan Thou hast been the helper.' What a majestic unfolding here of the Divine government! Well

may we await the issue. All along have His eyes seen it ; and the time is coming when all sufferings put into His retributive hand, shall receive their consideration. 'Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy ; for, behold, your reward is great in heaven.' God makes Himself, as it were, our debtor, —not 'because the one accords to the other, or belongs to it, but because of His promise,' as Augustine has it. But to reap this reward, it needs a tender conscience and a holy walk ; for, in the language of Tertullian, 'not the suffering but the cause makes the martyr.' With such precious consolations do we comfort ourselves, lest we also be led aside from the simplicity of our trust.

Upborne by these convictions, are we all the more earnest in pleading, knowing that 'the Judge is at the door.' The closing four verses of this Psalm, indeed, sound like so many grand chords of spiritual harmony. There is the grand judgment (ver. 15), the grand triumph (ver. 16), the grand deliverance (ver. 17), and the grand rest (ver. 18).¹ The prayer of ver. 15 will only be fully realized when the truth of ver. 16 shall have been established in the millennial dispensation. Meantime, as this is an eternal truth, do we comfort ourselves with the promises of vers. 17 and 18. Most suitably are these expressed, following the real signification of the Hebrew terms : 'Thou *hast* heard the longing of the poor' (in

¹ In the last verse there is a divinely ironical play upon the words, which has not inappropriately been rendered into Latin : '*Ut non amplius terreat homo terrenus.*'

spirit) ; 'Thou *wilt* make firm' — immovable, established — 'their heart ; Thou *wilt* cause Thine ear to be attentive' (to their sighing and crying). God *has* heard the desires of His people ; and He will answer them by granting them inward quiet and assurance, and by such continuous outward dealings in mercy as will be suitable to their case.

1. 'Seekest thou great things for thyself ? Seek them not.' The present is a state of disorder, and of prevailing rebellion against God and injustice among men, in which I must possess my soul in patience, and occupy till He cometh. Views of the perfectibility of the world are prone to lead us to fellowship with the world, and to undue conformity with its plans and enjoyments. Let us remember that we are 'in a strange land,' where the language of Canaan is not spoken, and the authority of its King is not owned. I must not be 'amazed with any great amazement,' nor be envious at the prosperity of the wicked. My affections must be set in heavenly places, where Christ Jesus sitteth at the right hand of the Father. But most earnest let me be in separating myself from this 'untoward generation.' Holiness for ever becometh His house and people ; and holiness is separation unto God. Let me not eat of their dainties nor rejoice in their joy. Let me look beneath the surface ; let me have wisdom and grace to discern the antichristian element, the practical, if not avowed, atheism of their ways, and the sure but awful end of their folly and sin.

2. But to cultivate heart-holiness two things are needed : poverty before God, and a spirit of believing prayer (ver. 12). I would have nothing but what Thou givest ; I would be

nothing but what Thou makest. Thou and I—I in Thee, and Thou in me! Even so, gracious Lord! Ever upwards to Thee, ever closer and nearer to Jesus, my Saviour, till I am for ever with Thee. And let me remember that (as St. Augustine has it) it is easier to give all our goods to the poor than to be poor before God. This day let me seek to know more of the fulness of Christ, that I may be emptied of all else; of His righteousness, grace, and joy, that as poor, needy, and mourning, I may find consolation in Him.

3. Yet 'Jehovah is King for ever and ever.' This is my hope, as it is that of the Church. Let me pray, work, and bear, for the result is not uncertain. And very frequently is it necessary to fall back upon that cardinal truth. I have often experienced that there is no surer way to revive our languishing faith, and to incite us to calm cross-bearing, than study of the personal history of our Lord, as presented in the Gospels. In measure as these great realities open to us, do we acquire confidence and comfort. 'Thou *hast* heard the desire of the humble.' Thou hast given Christ for them and to them, and with Him wilt Thou freely give all things: heart-establishment, inward comfort, strength, and safety, and such continuous deliverance as they need, in Thine attentive listening to their groans and prayers. If I believe this, what can be wanting to me? If I believe it not, practically and under the cross, what advantageth my faith?

And already beholding with the eye of faith, I can discern by the side of this 'Jehovah, King for ever and ever,' its necessary sequel, 'Perished *are* the heathen out of *His* land.'

XV.

QUIETNESS AND ASSURANCE.

- 1 IN the Lord put I my trust : how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain ?
- 2 For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string,
That they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.
- 3 If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do ?
- 4 The Lord is in his holy temple ! the Lord's throne is in heaven :
His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.
- 5 The Lord trieth the righteous ;
But the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth.
- 6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares ; fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest :
This shall be the portion of their cup.
- 7 For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness ; his countenance doth behold the upright.—PSALM XI.

VIEWED in the light of the Spirit, nothing can appear more strange to us than the carnal suggestions of the men of this world. It is, perhaps, at this point that the two ways most markedly diverge. Surely their counsel is not ours. They have omitted one element in their reasoning, and the absence of it vitiates all their conclusions. 'In the Lord put I my trust' (ver. 1). Our wondering rebuke of their advice, our triumphant challenge and calm confidence (ver. 1), spring not from ignorance of the number or the object of our enemies

(ver. 2). Nor are we insensible to our impotence under circumstances such as those supposed by them (ver. 3). 'If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?' He can wait upon the Lord, and in his patience possess his soul. There is often more accomplished by stillness in God than by what seems to the world the most active and successful work. Besides, stillness is often the needful preparation for highest success. At any rate, such are not times for withdrawing, far less for desponding, but for all the more earnest exercise of faith and prayer. It is a very common suggestion made to Christians to hold their views but to abate their testimony. Many reasons, satisfactory to the carnal mind, may be urged for not preaching in 'the King's chapel and the King's court.' Yet prudence is not always prudent. Therefore, so far as I am *personally* concerned, 'How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?' How many—not only avowed enemies, but professed friends—would bid us withdraw or desist! The same lying spirit who, in the mouth of the false prophets, urged Ahab to 'go up and prosper,' would, in the mouth of Peter, have kept the Saviour Himself from going up to Jerusalem to accomplish His decease. Such matters must be decided on far other principles. Granting that I am surrounded by apparent impossibilities, and that all palpable hope of deliverance or of usefulness is gone. But what have I to do with the *future*—except in the exercise of 'good hope?' Faith busies itself with the *present*; it is its nature to leave all the rest; it looks straight up to God in Christ, and away from what men call possibilities and probabilities, either in the way of

encouragement or discouragement. All things are possible to him that believeth. My answer to every objection is, 'In *Jehovah* put I my trust.' Mark, it is not only that I go to Him, but that I *trust* in Him; not only that I ask, but that I expect; not only that I have some requests, but that I have *Himself*, who is far above all requests. I have committed myself entirely to His keeping; His word is sufficient warrant, and His character sufficient surety for me. I will not prescribe either the time or the way of deliverance, but simply *trust*, not doubtingly, but assuredly. It is the safest, the best, and the most blessed course. Thanks be unto God, who *always* giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ. The result is uniform, and always of His own achieving. I must have *unlimiting* faith; I must not seek to know the end from the beginning. This is *His* province, mine it is to *trust* Him for it. In this absolute trustfulness are bound up, as in a threefold cord, my joy of faith, my holiness of heart, and my real safety. But what misery, were we to be always afraid of the arrow by day, or the pestilence by night, or of evil tidings! 'He that believeth shall not make haste.' Then, even if the foundations were destroyed, and the righteous unable to achieve anything! 'Jehovah is in His holy temple;' He hath not forsaken His heritage. 'Jehovah's throne is in heaven;' all power is given unto our King. His presence implies knowledge and government (ver. 4). The cause and kingdom are His, and full well He seeth all the plans of men, and readeth their inmost thoughts. One greater than Elisha is in the Syrian council-chamber, and knoweth their purposes. It is the assurance by faith of this Divine fact which gives such intense rest to the children of

God in their seeming distress. Anon He will interpose. Ours it will be, like Israel of old, to 'stand still and see the salvation of God' (ver. 6). Is not this enough, both so far as our persons and our work are concerned? The storm which rages all around has not reached heaven. Let us await the issue. Let us anticipate nothing, nor judge before the time. Lastly, we have the unspeakable comfort of this as an ultimate principle: 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.' We will not trouble ourselves with matters which are too high, nor burden ourselves with those which are too heavy, for us. We will look away from all, and rest on Him. And in the midst of all, 'His countenance doth behold the upright.' The light of His countenance shines on our hearts, and gives us peace; its presence directs us by the way; its glory is our reward. And this light is in the face of Jesus Christ.

1. O my soul, lay firm and lasting hold upon the Lord. My danger, like that of Peter, lies in looking to the wind and the waves, instead of looking to the Lord. How dare I burden my mind and heart with the administration of His providence? Nay, what have I to do even with present dangers and entanglements? If I trust him fully, I can assuredly leave all in His hands. It is enough for me to know that the Lord is in His holy temple; that He is; that He is in the place 'where prayer is wont to be made,' and always accepted; that He is on the mercy-seat, sprinkled with blood, and between the cherubim. But if I would have full trust in the Lord, let me not take counsel with men—friend nor foe—nor with mine own heart. My weakness lies in what the world calls strength. There are always *many*, of

all classes and professions, that say, 'Who will show us any good?' Too often and too long have I repaired to broken cisterns. Let me not murmur, when I am now entirely shut up to God. Let me rather rejoice in it, and expect signal triumph. Yet, come what may—seeming victory or apparent defeat, joy or sorrow, life or death—I will not quit my hold. This day, even now, and with my present difficulties and my present work, I will trust in the Lord. If He gave His own Son for me, what will He deny? 'We are *more* than conquerors through Him that loved us.'

2. Fear not, only believe. My defeat is only possible through want of faith, not of resources. 'Only be thou strong, and *very* courageous.' This is the sole condition of success. The righteous Lord *will* establish righteousness, by whom and as He willeth. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? If night gathers around, let me come in for shelter and for rest; let me nestle under the shadow of His wings, till these calamities be overpast.

3. Am I now fully trusting, not doubtingly groping; quietly waiting, not impatiently looking out; leaving the matter with Him, not taking it into my own hands? What burdeneth, distresseth, disquieteth my soul? In respect of *these things*, and not in a general or vague sense, will I trust in the Lord. I will dismiss all fears, by making *Him* my dread. Nor let me forget that it is mine to glorify God both by inward calm and by outward profession. He may well wait who waiteth for the Lord. So giveth He His beloved sleep. Consider then, my soul, what thou owest to grace, and who is thy Saviour, and still trust in Him; 'for I shall yet praise Him, who is the *health* of my countenance and *my God*.'

XVI.

HELP IN THE LORD.

- 1 HELP, Lord ; for the godly man ceaseth ; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.
- 2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour : with flattering lips, and with a double heart, do they speak.
- 3 The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things ;
- 4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail ; our lips are our own : who is lord over us ?
- 5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord ; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.
- 6 The words of the Lord are pure words : as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.
- 7 Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.
- 8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted. —PSALM XII.

THIS Psalm has been aptly compared to a ring, of which ver. 5 is the bright diamond. Most needful indeed is such a precious jewel in the dark setting all around. In this instance, as in Ps. ii., where similarly abounding wickedness threatens destruction to the kingdom of God, the inspired singer hears *directly* the voice of God (Ps. xii. 15 ; comp. Ps. ii. 6-9). The

kingdom of God seems in as great danger as its King ; but the safety of His people is bound up with that of their Lord.

They were evil days in which this cry of the Church was heard, though David occupied the throne of Israel and the Spirit of God tuned the lyre of his praise. Yet prevailing iniquity in the world is not a mark that God has forsaken His people. 'Help, Lord,' or rather 'Save, Jehovah'—make, or send safety or salvation,—*Hosannah*, is a cry both of distress and of joy, intermingling through the exercise of faith and prayer. Darkness cannot be complete so long as the Sun of Righteousness is in the heavens ; sorrow cannot be all-engrossing, so long as His promises are left us ; nor can our faith fail amid apparently prevailing wickedness, while we can cry to a present and a living God, who 'at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,' and 'hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things.'

In fact, when we betake ourselves to this prayer we have already really conquered. For the issue itself could never be doubtful. The point to be aimed at was for us to rise above the things seen to 'quietness and assurance' in God. And as surely as the prayer ascends comes down the *heard* answer of ver. 5, with its *future* of *immediateness*: 'Now will I arise, saith Jehovah?' For, as Augustine most truly saith, 'Our heart is unresting till it rest in Thee;' and a little further on: 'I will seek Thee, Lord, invoking Thee, and invoke Thee, believing in Thee.' Then all becomes plain, and he who formerly 'mourned in his complaint, and made a noise' (Ps.

lv. 2), becomes in ver. 6 what Luther, by a gloss on the word 'faithful' in ver. 1, calls one of 'the *Amen-people*.'

Perhaps the fundamental explanation and illustration of the sad state of matters described in this Psalm may be found in its last verse: 'All around the wicked walk proudly, when' (or since) 'vileness is exalted to the children of men.' When that which in itself is mean, low, vile, and worthless, comes to occupy the highest place in the esteem of the children of men ('comes up to exaltedness,' as the expression might be literally rendered), the wicked walk proudly all around. Thus placed at the end of the Psalm, this would form a standing protest against the great sin of the world, and a fit transition to the entreaty of Ps. xiii. And truly the description answers most correctly to the state of matters in times of trouble to the Church. Wealth, worldly distinctions, unsanctified intellect, and material force seem to come to the top. Men look up to these, and wickedness, if but allied with such fictitious advantages, no longer hides itself as ashamed. 'And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up,' is an apt portraiture of the 'last days' of the ancient Church, even as 'blessed is that man that maketh *Jehovah* his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies,' describes the godly believer. But this state of mind, perhaps more than any other, implies *faith*. It is extremely difficult to rise above the common views of men; indeed, only possible so far as we can realize the all-sufficiency, the omnipresence, and the omnipotence of our Father in Christ. But when I am able to understand that it is really *vileness* which is exalted—that it is not in any, nor in all these things,

to satisfy or to make me safe—an intense calm fills my soul. I am truly happy when I am truly free, and I am truly free when I truly rest in God.

But such being the common opinion entertained among men (ver. 8), we can more fully sympathize with the prayer of ver. 1. Nothing short of His own interposition will remedy the matter. Looking around us, we feel deeply the need of *His* sending help. 'The godly man,' the pious (literally, the *loving*, gracious) 'ceaseth,' or has come to an end; 'the faithful'—they who keep truth and continue true (according to Luther's apt rendering, 'the *Amen-people*')—'are clean gone from among the children of men.' 'And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.' Alas, where is the practical adherence to their profession, the faithfulness, even of believers, in seasons of spiritual decrepitude? What is their bearing in presence of the mammon-worship and the trust in material force characteristic of the latter days? We require to be strong in the Lord, and not merely to hold abstract principles but to experience the power of fellowship with God. Saith one, in effect: 'Money can buy and do anything; self-interest and self-seeking govern and move all' (ver. 2). 'Nay,' replies the believer, 'but Jehovah is higher and mightier by far, and all these appearances will be subverted and put to shame' (ver. 3). 'Power and violence will carry the day; hand joineth in hand; and who can resist what is the regular and organized state of things, the natural sequence of events?' (ver. 4). 'Nay, there is not such a natural sequence as you dream of. For the trial of our faith, and in carrying out the mystery of His providence, He allows

us to be poor and oppressed. But we give ourselves to prayer, and already we *hear* the promise of spiritual and perfect deliverance which *anon* shall be fulfilled (ver. 5). Thus having by faith overcome in this hand-to-hand conflict, we are prepared to receive the precious comforts which flow from the covenant of grace (ver. 6), and from its administration (ver. 7), and to understand both the reason and the duration of the present state of matters (ver. 8).

Thus it almost seems as if we had here a dialogue, or rather a contest, between 'the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience' and 'the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' Right over-against every forthputting of the one is the answer in faith and the victory by faith. The old truth, 'not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah,' is brought out, and tried 'as silver in a furnace of earth *purified* seven times.' Over-estimate of that which in itself is not only worthless, but vile (ver. 8), leads men to 'speak every one to his neighbour' (acquaintance or companion) 'vanity,' or rather that which is naught and untrue (absolutely viewed). That which *is* naught has become current coin among men, the principle of their social life, on which they act. 'Lips of smoothnesses, and with an heart and an heart they are speaking.' The verbs here indicate a continuity of action. Trying to please others, but in reality pleasing themselves and seeking their own; what a sadly true portraiture of the motives and conduct of the world! But here we take our stand; we are not to be 'carried away with their dissimulation;' we know other, we believe other, and we expect other. We do not call down,

but we anticipate judgment both to 'the lips of smoothnesses, and to the tongue speaking great things' (ver. 3). Nor shall we be entangled in their intrigues, nor be led astray by their seeming wisdom, their astute plans and machinations, which promise rich success, viewing it from their stand-point, as stated in ver. 8: who have said, 'In reference to our tongues, we will put forth strength, or make proof of strength' (*heroical* valour and success); 'who is lord over us?' Our devices and plans are sure to prosper; what matters truth or righteousness? And here faith, so to speak, is no longer left to answer for itself. God Himself now speaketh, and His voice is heard, as His presence is felt by the believer. 'On account of the oppression' (or desolation) 'of the suffering meek' (for the term includes both), 'for the groaning of the poor needy' (both being again included in the Hebrew word), '*now* I will arise, is saying Jehovah' (the tense indicating a continuous act); 'I will put into salvation' (place in safety) 'him that longeth for it.' Therefore let patience have her perfect work. We are very prone to be improperly affected by the state of the world. If we fall not into unbelief, we are apt to fall into impatience. We fret or are misled; we judge and avenge, and seek to right matters, or at least ourselves. Oh, to carry all our concerns by faith to Him, and in faith to wait for Him,—*content* with what He *saith* and *expectant* of what He *doeth*!

Having reached this stage, we enjoy much blessed quiet in the Lord. We know that, unlike the words of men, 'the sayings of Jehovah are pure sayings' (without any admixture), 'silver molten in the furnace unto the earth' (silver molten in

the furnace, and run out from it on the ground), 'purified' (or passed through the furnace) 'seven times.' We can take each saying of Jehovah; we can take it to ourselves; we can take it literally. We can rely upon it; we can look for its full realization. Our hope is in His word, which has no admixture. It is silver, which in the furnace of affliction and trial of our faith has been molten and run out to us as precious metal, seven times, which is the number of the covenant. Here also Christ is before us, the true 'Angel of the Covenant.' 'Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' I cannot be desponding, nor failing in faith and patience when I realize Gethsemane and Calvary. Nor need I be afraid. 'Thou, Jehovah, wilt preserve—guard—them' (Thou art guarding them); 'Thou wilt preserve him' (who longeth for Thy salvation, ver. 5) 'from this generation'—and far beyond it—'for ever.'

Thus can we once more return to ver. 8, but now in the spirit of Ps. lxxiii. and with this conclusion: 'When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, *until* I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.' 'For the needy shall not alway be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.'

1. Let me seek to obtain a believing, and therefore correct, view of men and matters. Let me not be led astray by appearances. I feel that I am in great danger of being influenced by the principles, the conduct, and the policy of the men

around me. O my soul, what are *they* seeking, and what art *thou* seeking? What is *their* highest good, and what is *thine*? Believest thou *this word*, and what it saith concerning time and eternity, concerning unrest and rest, woe and joy? Then why all this haste and anxiety? Surely all these things profit not; they perish with the using. Yet let me not think it an easy matter to separate myself from the ways of the world. Almost before I am aware I am ensnared. What I hold to be true is the word of God; what I hold to be influential and successful is the possession of Christ and power with God; what I hold to be joyous is the indwelling of His Spirit. Right over-against the maxims of men let me place the sayings of Jéhovah; right over-against their plans and purposes, His salvation, grace, presence, and blessing. O Lord, I will seek Thee, and Thee alone; to Thee let me cleave; keep me by Thy mighty power; keep me close to Thyself; keep me pure and humble; keep me believing, calm, and expectant.

2. Ofttimes in the furnace of affliction has Thy word been tried, and like molten silver run out. Trial tries Thy word as well as my faith. And Thy word, how far better is it than my faith? Had it not been for Thy word, my faith would have failed. And then I have gathered up the molten silver of Thy word, and proved it to be truly current coin. It has met all my liabilities, it has provided for all my wants. O that I might never return to the dross of this world! Why should we 'spend money for that which is not bread,' and our 'labour for that which satisfieth not?' *This day*, let me 'come, buy wine and milk without money and without

price.' All this *freely*, and all this from Thee. Grant me, then, I beseech thee, holy independence, because holy dependence upon Thee.

3. The Lord *saith* and the Lord *doeth*. He speaketh peace into our souls by His gracious promise of deliverance, and of the salvation for which we long (ver. 5). Of this we have the pledge in our being made meek, suffering, needy, and poor, and in our crying to Him—all which are of His grace. And the Lord giveth what He promiseth. He now guardeth us, and will preserve us, not only from this generation but for ever (ver. 7). I rest on the promise of grace, and on the grace of the promise, on His word and on His almighty arm. And I am safe. My prayer already wears the garb of praise. And what is now the principle of His dealings with His people will soon become the law of His administration and kingdom. Only let me remember that the experience of His grace is ever couched in the language of spiritual fellowship with Him. '*Thou shalt keep them, O Lord ; Thou shalt preserve them.*' Therefore must it ever be : *with* Thee, as well as *from* Thee and *in* Thee.

WHEN, lo, Messiah, in His strength
Shall break upon them like the sun,
And shine away those clouds at length,
Which swiftly from His presence run,—
Thou Sun of Righteousness, arise,
Arise with healing in Thy wings ;
And chase away Thine enemies,
And reign for ever, King of Kings !

BARCLAY.

XVII.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

- 1 How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord ? for ever ?
How long wilt thou hide thy face from me ?
- 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily ?
How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me ?
- 3 Consider and hear me, O Lord my God : lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the
sleep of death ;
- 4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him ;
And those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.
- 5 But I have trusted in thy mercy ; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.
- 6 I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

PSALM XIII.

THIS is a night-Psalm, both literally and spiritually considered. Yet is it the expression of one who by grace had learned to say, 'Where is God my Maker, *who giveth songs in the night ?*' Most precious to us, in our darkness and affliction, are those records of a soul troubled and in anguish, seeking and finding peace in the covenant of grace. They occur so frequently, and so fully suit our state, as to make this Psalter truly our spiritual diary. Not 'the blood of bulls and of goats,' nor 'the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean,' could 'purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.' These only 'sanctified to the purify-

ing of the flesh.' They made ceremonially clean, but left the conscience guilt-laden and sin-stained. 'The *new* testament,' the covenant of *grace*; 'Thy mercy' and 'Thy salvation,' alone bring pardon and peace.

These night-long pleadings in great heaviness of heart, and this deliverance by the application of His grace, in answer to prayer, and received by faith, do they not remind us of the days of His flesh, when, by the word of His power, He restored the dead, healed the sick, and cast out devils? And do they not apply to us 'on whom the ends of the world are come?' How, as in one moment, the heavy burden is removed, and the anxious fears are dispelled when He sheweth His countenance! 'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' To groan and to cry are the pledge of being delivered and comforted. No strange thing has befallen us. We have only had a glimpse, and but a glimpse, of our real state and need. But whereas He afflicteth a little, He comforteth abundantly. 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all* sin.' 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost' (not which felt itself lost). '*Whosoever* will' (though he feel himself a hard-hearted, stiff-necked, and rebellious sinner), '*let* him take the water of life *freely*.' It is certain that we can never mend the state of matters, nor make ourselves at any time more fit to receive Christ than we are at present. It is certain that no one who ever came to Christ was, at the time of his so coming, better or more willing than we are at present. It is certain that no one who prayed was

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ever more worthy to be answered than we are. On the point of qualification, therefore, *we all*—all men who ever lived—stand on precisely the same level. And it is equally certain that, so far as Christ's accessibility, or His willingness and ability to save are concerned, *we all* stand also on the same level. 'Him that cometh to Me, I will no wise cast out.' 'Who will have *all men* to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.' 'And the *Spirit* and the bride say, *Come!*' It therefore only needs to make experiment of this, and venturing upon His word and His free love to make application—which is, to *believe*. And if so, why *not now?*

The fourfold complaint with which the Psalm opens is not unknown to us. Whether, so far as the state of our soul in general, or some special burden, is concerned, it sometimes seemeth as if Jehovah had forgotten us, and were hiding His face from us, leaving us to the counsels of our own hearts and to the power of the enemy (vers. 1, 2). Truly our pleading is then like *striving* 'to enter in at the *strait* gate.' Luther most aptly characterizes this questioning as 'hope which despairs, and despair which yet hopes.' The fact that it is couched in the form of *questions*, and addressed to *Him* in the accents of prayer, is evidence of the godly character of this sorrow, and pledge of its speedy removal. To shut up sorrow or conviction in our hearts is to be consumed. But to come with it straight to God, to pour out our hearts, and to tell *all* our sorrows and doubts, even that of His forgetting us '*for ever*,' which is the doubt of doubts, is evangelical repentance, turning and returning to God, as revealed in the

covenant of grace. It is very characteristic of our apprehension of God's withdrawal, that the question '*for ever*' should arise within us. We never can think of God's distance from us, without coupling with it the anxious query, '*for ever?*' Thus apprehensions of the wrath to come are not evidence of a soul in a state of nature, provided they are brought before God, and assume the form of prayer. When I am so tormented, let me straightway go to God, and not revolve the matter within myself, nor seek for evidences in myself, instead of manifestations from *Him*. Yet the anguish of a soul so deserted is most distressing. 'I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer.' 'Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions?' There is a holy impatience in the complaints of ver. 1, which cannot bear denial. Under such circumstances, the soul cannot find comfort in its own devices. 'How long shall I place, or set up, counsels' (or, devices) 'in my soul' (viz., by night), (and have) 'sorrow in my heart by day?' Thus far for the one sequence of this desertion. As for the other: 'How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?' He would be bold indeed who would limit the expression, as indited under the teaching of the Holy Ghost for the whole Church, to any one class of enemies. It applies to all enemies, whether temporal or spiritual, whether within or without. Wherever there is such an enemy, I may utter this entreaty; and whenever I utter it I may look for an answer. 'For He must reign, till He hath put *all* enemies

under His feet.' Our privileges are not to be limited nor measured, since our prayers and His grace and power are not to be limited nor measured. 'In *everything* by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving' (most needful and most rational), 'let your requests be made known unto God.' 'All are yours ; and ye are Christ's ; and Christ is God's.'

Confession having been made, and the burden rolled off, comes the entreaty, not unmingled with 'anxious sighing' (vers. 3, 4). A fourfold prayer this, as there had been a fourfold complaint. See how firmly prayer holds by Him, when the moment his soul is unburdened—by leaving its burden before God,—he can say, 'Look hither' (attentively behold, consider), 'hear me, Jehovah, *my God*.' Most significantly he adds, after entreating *grace* from our covenant God in Christ, 'lighten' (literally, cause to be light) 'mine eyes, lest I sleep death.' 'For with Thee is the fountain of *life* ; in *Thy* light shall *we see* light.' Light and life, sleep and death, are spiritually correlative terms. As every one in spiritual distress, he primarily solicits *inward light*, and only thus outward deliverance. It needs the opening of our eyes on His part, light from on high, if we are not to sleep death. But it only needs that. Christ and salvation are *there* ; we do not see them, and hence we sleep in death. But to *behold* is to live. Oh, what subject for prayer, what need of prayer, what encouragement to prayer! 'What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?' We may apply directly to our God, and from a state of sleep and death be immediately transferred into one of light and of life. Oh, golden key of believing

prayer, which Jesus giveth us to unlock those pearly gates of the realm of light and of life! 'In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.' I *have* all, since Jesus is offered to me. There is only a '*lest*' left of fear and danger, or rather a '*that not*,' as the term means. These things are behind me. I urge them as pleas, knowing that 'my God' cannot 'deliver me to the will of mine enemies.' 'That mine enemy shall not say' (be not saying), 'I have been able against him' (I *could*, I have been powerful, or prevailed); 'my oppressors' (they that press upon me, my troublers) 'jubilee' (or be jubilant) 'when' (or, because) 'I shall be moved' (am being moved).

But, as already noted, this is *past*. After prayer comes praise; after faith come peace and confidence. Right over against their devices and jubilee he puts his own trust and jubilee, and there he remains, singing the praises of redeeming mercy. 'And I, in Thy grace have I trusted' (the idea being here that of *cleaving* to it); 'my heart shall jubilee in Thy salvation; I will sing to Jehovah, for He hath dealt bountifully with me' (He hath returned benefit unto me). Here there is firm ground on which to rest. Not looking behind, but *cleaving* to free and sovereign grace; laying hold upon, and holding by it, though in truth it is 'Thy grace' which holdeth us. If this is not gospel, or glad tidings, surely it is nowhere else to be found, in heaven nor on earth. Arise, my soul, and make trial of it; learn to know Him, learn to taste grace, and learn to jubilee in His salvation—body, soul, and spirit, world without end. Amen.

1. Let me resolve this to me most important question :

Whence come my sorrows, doubts, and fears? Come they not all from the withdrawal of the light of His countenance? I have not because I ask not. If I am distressed, why should I not tell it to Him? Assuredly this offers the only 'door of hope.' If I am sin-laden, why should I not confess it to Him? if I am unbelieving, why should I not go to Him? if I am utterly lost, ruined, and helpless, why should I not apply to Him? 'To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' 'Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief.' Conviction is the knowledge and sense of our estrangement from Him. Should the knowledge and sense of my want keep me from seeking relief? To be lost is the ground and argument, not a hindrance, of our application to Christ. Let me remember this: the ground of my acceptance with God is *Christ*,—not my penitence, contrition, nor return; Christ, who 'loved me,' not whom I loved; Christ, who 'gave Himself for me,' not for whom I gave myself in devotion and self-abnegation. Let me not look for the fruits ere the branch is grafted into the vine. My title, my sole title, is *His* love. Then let me come, let me come now, let me come as I am; let me confess, pray, and believe, for Jesus passeth by, and 'this day is salvation come to this house.'

2. By grace and only by grace,—through faith and only through faith: even so, my God, that all the glory may be thine in Christ Jesus. My counsels and devices, my attempts at amendment, which I bore with me all night, only bring grief all day long. With Thee, Jehovah, lies the initiative. To Thee will I now apply; and Thou art 'my God.' Since Christ became 'my brother,' Thou art 'my God.' I tread on

firm ground. 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness' (or liberty) 'to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus' (on this twofold ground) 'by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil,—that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God;' (conclusion :) 'let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.' I will venture, I will come, I will have; so give Thou, gracious God, both light and life.

3. O what change and transformation from this darkness to that light, from this death to that life, from this sorrow to that joy! O free and sovereign love that sought me! O infinite and unutterable grace that found me; O glorious and most precious mystery of Thy incarnation, life, death, and resurrection, that healed me! I will jubilee in Thy salvation. For it contains all that Thou givest, and all that I need. 'I will sing unto Jehovah, because He hath dealt bountifully with me.' There are too many ungrateful and non-jubilant Christians. Yet, what cause have we for jubilee, if we are inside the gate,—nay, even while we are yet outside of it, but knocking, that there is such a gate and such an One to open it! Most precious is the salvation of my soul; most glorious is the liberty and life which I now enjoy in Him. Let me be one of the upward and outward-looking, not one of the downward and inward-looking Christians. Let me praise redeeming love. Let me praise Him with my lips and with my life, with tongue and with pen, with health and with wealth, in service and in suffering, in sorrow and in death. And ever let me rest on Him and cleave to His grace. Amen.

XVIII.

SIN AND ITS CURE.

- 1 THE fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.
They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.
- 2 The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.
- 3 They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy ;
There is none that doeth good, no, not one.
- 4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge ?
Who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord.

PSALM XIV.

IN this Psalm (of which Ps. liii. may be regarded as a later edition), the complaints of the two previous deepen into a general view of mankind in their natural alienation from God. Accordingly, it is adduced by Paul (Rom. iii. 10-12), as Biblical evidence of the state of misery and condemnation both of Jew and Gentile. The question why such a picture should form the subject of 'one of the songs of Zion,' is answered not only by the spiritual contrast presented in the three last verses of our Psalm, but by the fact that this truth helps us to understand the present state of matters, and enables us to possess our souls in patience, while it leads us to humble ourselves and to ascribe all the glory to

sovereign grace. 'Hearken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek Jehovah: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged!' Thus, knowledge of sin is the way to faith. Having nothing, we require to receive all, and that of grace, and therefore by faith. Again, want of humility, which is the gracious reflex of self-knowledge, leads to impatience with men and matters. In measure as I know what I am and what I deserve, will I, to whom so much needeth to be forgiven, be able to bear with my fellow-debtors. In measure also as I have been taught my real position before God, will I submit to His dealings and leadings in providence, under a deep sense that I, 'who am less than the least of all saints,' 'am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant.'

It is well to sound the *depths* of our corruption if we are to understand our state before God (ver. 1). At the root of all evil, deep in our hearts, lies atheism. This is the ultimate spring both of our thinking and acting, of our state of soul and of our state of life: 'They have been corrupt; they have done abominable works' (or, perhaps, 'they have caused corrupt; they have caused abominable works.') Luther very aptly points out here the accumulation of terms under which *all* are included in this charge. The expression 'corrupt' used in the text is the same as that applied to the earth before the judgment of the flood (Gen. vi. 12). It is sadly strange how similar the state of matters has become before each great interposition of God. All feeling, thinking, and acting of fallen man, however wise or clever it may seem in

the eyes of the world, is characterized by Him who searcheth the hearts as *folly*. Scripture employs five different terms to denote *folly*, of which the one here used gives the idea of *fading*, of want of sap, or of reality—the fundamental view being that of a man substituting his own empty, unreal, and unsubstantial thoughts and ways for those of God. A fuller description of such persons (with the employment of the same word) occurs in Isa. xxxii. 6. The absolute want of substance and reality of such deceiving thoughts of the heart is thus set before us. And here it would be well to examine the spring of our own desires and actions, and to see whether or not the charge applies to us. Truly awful as it sounds, alas, here also it becomes us to plead: ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’

How general this corruption is, appears from vers. 2, 3: ‘Jehovah from heaven has looked down to see whether there is any who understandeth, who seeketh’ (asketh, careth for, inquireth) ‘after God.’ In opposition to the practical denial of the Most High—Elohim—of His personality, rule, providence, and claims, *Jehovah*, the covenant God, has looked down from heaven. No one looked up to Him, but He looked down on them. See how anxiously, if we may use such terms, our God inquireth after and is ready to meet *any* who seek after Him. And what a dreadful spectacle, as viewed from heaven, is here presented! ‘All’ (literally, the totality) ‘have declined’ (turned or gone aside from God), ‘together have they become putrid’ (a putrid carcass, as it were); ‘there is not who doeth good, there is not even one.’ And such were we, all of us, when sovereign grace found

us; and such would we be, all of us, if sovereign grace were to leave us. Having declined from God, we are a dead, putrid mass, without a trace of good in even the most promising, kind, and benevolent. 'Son of man, can these bones live?' 'Lord, Thou knowest,' and Thou alone. 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thine help.' Surely, it needed God's intervention in Christ to change this state of things. Oh, what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from the living God! Now that we are pardoned can we understand, not only the state of nature but that of grace. 'Who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver.' Well may we, like Job of old, *abhor* ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. And how can we go on in sin who have been delivered from it? What incredible power must sin have had over us—truly, *sold* under sin—if even now we can be so often attracted by it! Whenever I am tempted to laxity, to forgetfulness, or to sin, let me think of this description. And again, whenever I am tempted to faint-heartedness and unbelief under the pressure of the ungodly, let me think of the suddenness of His promised interposition (ver. 8).

It is a positive relief to turn from this description to note a reference to His Church. Blessed be God, however small and persecuted, there is a people, whom Jehovah here calls '*My* people.' The conduct of the world towards His Church is summed up as spiritual *ignorance*, as *consuming* the people of God, and that with the same indifference and apparent claim of right as if it were a matter of course, just as men eat their daily bread; and again, as *non-acknowledg-*

ment of God, prayerlessness, and iniquity. In all these cases it seems as if primarily the *misery* rather than the *guilt* of sin were referred to, its folly rather than its sinfulness. For God condescendeth to reason as well as to warn. In the first clause their folly appeareth in their ignorance, and that in the face of *such* light. 'Do they not know,' (is it so, that they are so ignorant?) 'all the workers of naught?'¹ In the second clause of the verse the bearing of their conduct upon the Church of God is considered. In reality, 'eating up my people, they eat bread.' The Church of God has always been oppressed and unresisting, and the world taketh it as a matter of course that we should be sneered at, hardly spoken of, and evil-entreated. But under these trials we have almost sufficient comfort in the designation applied to us, 'My people.' To belong to their number far outweighs everything else. But the fullest manifestation of the folly and sin of the world lies in their not calling upon Jehovah, or seeking after Him. If this is the topmost bough of the tree, have we not all sat under its branches? Yet the full misery and guilt of not seeking after Jehovah, none but a converted soul can realize. But again, even here, at the outset, when the conduct of the world is stripped of all fictitious appearances, and its real character is seen as in the light of eternal truth, the safety and happiness of God's people may already be inferred. For, even though there were not another promise in the Scriptures, I

¹ Our terms *naught* and *naughty* also embody the ideal connexion between nothingness and wickedness, only that the Hebrew also includes that of falsehood,—sin being presented alike as nothing, as false or deceptive, and as iniquity.

would, as against all enemies, be satisfied with the declaration and assurance from His lips, conveyed in the expression, 'My people.' 'Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in Me.' Simply to believe is sufficient balm for every heart-sore, and sufficient help against all world-tribulation. Lord, if it be so, if Thou claimest and callest us *Thy* people, then are we safe, eternally safe, which is much more and much better than, though it also implies, temporally safe; even as also we covet no higher good, and seek no better name, than that of those who 'call upon Jehovah.'

1. 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' Yet will we not despair. We despair of *it*, but not of *Thee*. 'He saw that there was no man, and wondered that that there was no intercessor; therefore *His* arm brought salvation unto Him.' One of the first and one of the last lessons which we have to learn is the corruption of our whole nature. Law and grace, what we experience and what we have not experienced, teach it. Yet in this respect how slow are we—not to admit, but to submit! These practical inferences would I derive from it. Let me feel, and own myself, *lost*. Let me despair of self. For any holy motion, for any commencement of good, nay, even for any reception of good, I must wholly and solely depend upon 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation.' I need pardon; I need healing; I need One to die for me, and to raise me up, by infusing into my dead soul His life. And I need a provision which will come down to me and meet my case. Most precious is the offer of the gospel, in all its freeness and fulness. But I need more. I have not the power to receive it. I require the

grace of the Holy Ghost. And even after I have received that grace, I require the constant aid and support of His Spirit. But all this is provided in His covenant; and all that is so provided is freely placed at my disposal. Let me examine myself in these respects. Have I ever felt the bitterness of sin, the lost condition of my soul, and the helpless sinfulness of my heart? Have I been led out of myself to Christ? Have I been taught to cleave to Christ, and to depend upon the daily supplies of grace? To all these questions let me return this practical answer of going anew to Christ, confessing my sin and mine unbelief. What I have not, He, and He alone, can give. Thus let the law be my schoolmaster; let it lead me to faith, and faith to praise.

2. Whatever may have been my past course, I am chargeable with practical atheism. In our carnality, being ever prone to judge of things by their visible consequences, this our fundamental sin is least noticed or accounted of. We are concerned in proportion as we *see* the effects of our sin—and this is another proof of our practical atheism. Yet 'seeing Him who is invisible' is the paradox which forms the fundamental principle of our spiritual life. The latter must, in the present dispensation of things, be a constant negation of the visible. All sin springs from our alienation from God, and all good from assertion and realization of Him. For consider, O my soul, what would entice or allure thee into the paths of evil; what could shake thine allegiance or induce thee to place confidence in an arm of flesh; what could fill thee with doubts and fears, or lead thee to yield to carnal suggestions, if thou wert satisfied in God, still in God,

and full of God ? Has it not been so since we knew Him, that our never-failing remedy was to flee to Jesus, and that when we would vanquish sin we rather sought to be vanquished by Christ ? We are elevated above those angry waves when our feet are placed upon *the Rock*. Return unto God is therefore the first and chief point of our change or conversion. O Lord, too long have I strayed from Thee ; I confess this as the point of my departure and as the constant cause of my offence ; but in Thy grace return Thou unto me, and turn me unto Thyself. Let this be the point of my return ; let this be the mainspring of my new life.

3. Yet He hath a people which He maketh, and owneth as *His* people. Their cause is dear to Him ; it is His cause. O to belong to that number ! What hinders it ? ‘For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.’

WHAT father will deny his sons ?
Or will the Lord His chosen ones ?
Have I bestow'd My Christ indeed,
Mine only Son for them to bleed ;
And shall I now withhold the grace
He purchased for Mine elect race ?

BARCLAY.

XIX.

THE GREAT INTERPOSITION.

- 5 THERE were they in great fear : for God is in the generation of the righteous.
6 Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the Lord is his refuge.
7 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion !
When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people,
Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad. — PSALM XIV.

To possess our souls in patience is one of the special graces of His Spirit. Perhaps no other contrast is so fully brought out in the Book of Psalms as that between the Church and the world ; all the more perhaps because, owing to the peculiar character of the preliminary dispensation, the two might have been so readily confounded in the one outward theocracy. And again, no other grace is more frequently called into exercise, in that period of constant miracles, than that of ‘patience of hope.’ It is as if the Lord, by His dealings in providence, had intended to deliver His people from those outward supports to which they might have been more prone to have resorted. And so it ever is. Very generally in our experience help is not got in the direction in which it had been expected. These disappointments help us to understand the principle which, running through Scripture like a golden thread, is equally exhibited in the history and teaching of

the Old Testament—‘*above nature.*’ Taught by the Spirit of God we can feel its preciousness ; sheltered by Divine grace we experience it only for good. But to the world the sudden and unexpected character of these interpositions is like the destruction which overtook Egypt’s host, when ‘in the morning watch Jehovah looked’ unto it ‘through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily,’ and at last swept away the fugitives with the returning flood. In view of this impending interposition also, may the Church ask with wonder and awe : ‘Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge,’ that, not remembering *whose* property they are attacking, they eat up His people ‘as bread’?

For, when their folly has become fully and finally manifest, they shall proceed no further. God waiteth long, but not for ever. The ominous silence is broken by the thunders of judgment. Their foolish confidence is followed by sudden dismay. ‘For when they shall say, Peace and safety ; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child ; and they shall not escape.’ ‘There—they have feared fear’ (been greatly terrified), ‘for Elohim is in the generation of the righteous.’ They know not Jehovah and they fear Him not ; but even *Elohim*, the God of might and of power, is in the midst of His people. This discovery is, alas, not made in grace but in judgment. The first thought of God to which the men of the world open their minds is that of His justice and judgment. *Here* we may know Jehovah—*there* they shall know Elohim. It is a pre-

cious and sweet thought to follow the term 'generation,' which in this connexion is always applied to the small and persecuted Church through the other passages in which it is employed, as 'the generation of them that seek Him' (Ps. xxiv. 6) ; 'the generation of Thy children' (Ps. lxxiii. 15) ; 'the generation of the upright' (Ps. cxii. 2). In the parallel Psalm (liii. 5) we read, 'where no fear was,'—where in their carnal ease and security they anticipated no fear, but said, 'Peace, peace.' Nothing more terrible than the sudden destruction of God's enemies. If the Church should hourly be anticipant of her salvation in the return of her Lord, the world should be hourly afraid of His sudden coming. 'Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.' It almost seems as if the waters were now returning upon them, like those of the Red Sea upon the hosts of Egypt. 'The counsel of the poor ye are putting to shame, for Jehovah is his refuge.' Here is alike the contrast, the reason of their conduct, and the certainty of its failure. Faith is represented as fleeing to Jehovah for safety, and this is one aspect of it, as cleaving to Him is another, and trusting in Him a third.

Having reached this high and strong point, we *are* safe, and can look forward, not only with calmness, but with joy. Our 'redemption draweth nigh,' and we have again attained to 'jubilee,' this time in 'the salvation' of God's Israel, as formerly in our own 'salvation' (Ps. xiii. 5)—the terms being identical. As against *my own* oppression (Ps. xiii.), caused by the wickedness and perseverance of mine enemies, I give myself to prayer, and *cleaving* to His covenant grace, my heart shall jubilee in His salvation (Ps. xiii. 5). As against

the universal and prevailing wickedness of men, the poor oppressed Church *fleeth* for refuge to Jehovah ; and here also in answer to the cry of those who suffer, and the believing prayer of those who wait, there is jubilee and gladness, this time not merely in the hearts of the poor, but ‘ *Jacob* shall jubilee and *Israel* shall rejoice.’ To individual suffering we oppose individual prayer, and cling to Christ. But the Church in the midst of her enemies is not forsaken. These bonds will be broken and the glorious liberty of the children of God become manifest. This then is the hope of the Church. Not that the world will improve, nor that the relative position of parties will change, but that *He* will ‘ give the salvation of Israel out of Zion.’ We look for ‘ a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.’ We look not for improval but for removal. ‘ When Jehovah returneth to the bondage of His people, Jacob shall jubilee and Israel shall rejoice.’ And, indeed, literally so. For the accomplishment of His promises and the deliverance of His people are associated with salvation to and on Mount Zion, and with the restoration of Israel. What a glorious consummation, and what joyous acclamations shall greet the day of the return of our King ! With these promises did they of old comfort themselves in dark days (for example, Jer. xlv. 27, 28 ; Zech. xii. 10 ; xiii. 2) ; and with them we stay our hearts, knowing that ‘ the end of all things is at hand,’ and ‘ looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.’ Finally, ‘ wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be *diligent*, that ye may be found of Him *in peace, without spot and blameless.*’

1. Once more, let me turn inwards to see the misery of my natural state, and to be led to the sole and grand remedy. I cannot too much nor too often apply myself to this. And I shall best learn the corruption of human nature by studying it *within myself*. 'For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies,'—in short, the whole catalogue of breaches of both tables of the law. And no wonder if the heart is alienated from God, and we practically deny even His being and power. Therefore let me seek to begin the reformation at the heart. '*Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me.*' And how deeply must we feel in reading this Psalm the full truth of our Lord's warning, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the *kingdom* of God.' Our disease is too deep for human remedies. It needs His interposition, a new creation, for the old is wholly corrupted ('they have made corrupt,' ver. 1) ; it needs His sovereign grace. Let me learn the depths of my misery *now* ; let me learn it in order to have it removed ; let me learn it by learning to know Thee. Coming as I am, with my load of guilt, with my sense of inability for all good, let me be washed in the precious blood of Jesus, and by Thy Holy Spirit make me one of Thy people, of the generation of the just,—nay, let me jubilee in so great a salvation !

2. The reason of the enmity and opposition of the world towards the Church, is the general corruption of our nature. Thus am I in my natural state as guilty as others. In their ignorance they eat God's people as bread ; in their false confidence they put to shame the counsel of the poor. I under-

stand then the necessary enmity of the world ; it is part of my share in following Christ ; it is 'the cross.' 'The friendship of the world *is* enmity with God,' and these two have ever been paired in the history of God's covenant dealings. 'Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you : but *rejoice*, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings ; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.' This then is the badge and the test of my discipleship. Am I willing to bear it ; am I prepared to have it ; am I ready to 'come out' and be separate ? Here also does the corruption and the practical atheism of my heart trouble me. O for grace, for more grace, for more lively and loving views of Thyself, thou great Cross-bearer, thou 'Apostle and High Priest of our profession.'

3. But even this dark picture of human corruption has His grace put into the golden frame of His promises. Sin-laden earth crieth to the Lord, not only for vengeance but for deliverance. There is no other remedy for earth's curse, and weariness, and groaning ; no other safety nor establishment of His kingdom ; no other hope nor jubilee of His Church, than in *His* coming. And, 'He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly ; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.' 'His going forth is prepared as the morning ; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.' 'O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion !' It *will* come, and that speedily. The gathering shadows, the deepening night, the rising cry, all bespeak

the approach of dawn. 'The Lord shall come, and ten thousands of His saints with Him.' 'Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him.'

'That hallow'd morn shall chase away
The sorrows of the night.'

On this hope let our eye be steadily bent, by it let our arm be constantly nerved, on it let our heart intently rest, towards it let our labours and our prayers be ever directed, and with it let us comfort ourselves this day, and until the day 'when Jehovah returneth to the captivity of His people!'

THE world is very evil ;
The times are waxing late :
Be sober and keep vigil ;
The Judge is at the gate :
The Judge that comes in mercy,
The Judge that comes with might,
To terminate the evil,
To diadem the right.

And when the Sole-Begotten
Shall render up once more
The kingdom to the FATHER,
Whose own it was before,—
Then glory yet unheard of
Shall shed abroad its ray,
Resolving all enigmas,
An endless Sabbath-day.

RHYTHM OF S. BERNARD.

XX:

HOLINESS UNTO JEHOVAH.

- 1 LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?
2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,
And speaketh the truth in his heart.
3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour,
Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.
4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear
the Lord:
He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.
5 He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the
innocent.
He that doeth these things shall never be moved.—PSALM XV.

THIS Psalm, which is primarily intended for self-examination, marks the true characteristics of 'the generation of the righteous.' Like all scriptural self-examination, it leads to comfort in dependence on Divine grace (ver. 5). In contradistinction to external privileges, it refers to the hopes of God's spiritual Israel (ver. 1); in opposition to a merely outward compliance with the demands of the law, it traces in outline the true character of walking with God; while, in contrast to all self-righteousness, it finally refers to the grace of God in which we stand. Besides its frequent reference to the *spirit* of the Old Testament dispensation, a marked con-

nexion subsists between it and two other passages of Scripture. Thus, the fullest illustration of the words, 'He that doeth these things shall never be moved,' is given in the corresponding passage, Isa. xxxiii. 13 to end, especially vers. 16, 17: 'He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread *shall be given* him, his waters *shall be sure*. Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off.' Again, the fullest unfolding and application of the whole Psalm is that by our blessed Lord in His sermon on the mount (Luke vi.), closing with the parable of the house founded on the rock, which could not be shaken by flood nor stream.

To begin our self-examination by setting before our eyes the blessed privileges of God's people, here and hereafter, is indeed sweet. This is to 'covet earnestly the best gifts.' Not from morbid feeling, but from joyous longing after Zion, the city of our God, do we enter upon jealous sifting and searching of our hearts. The joy of God's people is twofold: 'Who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in the mountain of Thy holiness?' The former refers to the Church militant, the latter to the Church triumphant. The tabernacle and Mount Zion were figures of the 'good things to come.' To the former only the priests, to the latter only Israelites, had access. But we are all 'a priestly nation,' 'the Israel of God.' This David and all Old Testament believers felt. They saw His 'day afar off and rejoiced' (Ps. xxvii. 4; lxi. 4; lxxv. 1; lxxxiv. 4; compare the expression, Eph. ii. 19, 'ye are . . . of the *household* of God,' in its most literal sense). There is no surer test of our spirituality than to long after

His felt presence (Ps. xxvii. 4 ; lxxxiv. 2). Very noteworthy also is here the appeal to '*Jehovah*,' which indicates so realized a sense of these blessings, and the expressions '*Thy* tabernacle,' 'the mountain of *Thy* holiness' (comp. Ps. xlii. xliii). For nothing less than fellowship with the living God can meet the wants of the renewed soul (Ps. lxxiii. 25).

But we are too prone to substitute our enjoyment for our service of God. These feelings of heavenly citizenship and of earthly communion with Him,—this intense longing for more of His presence here, and for the eternal light hereafter,—are the root which is in Christ, and of which our service, both internal and external, is the offspring. 'Holiness unto Jehovah' is separation from the world and its ways (Ps. xiv.) It is more than that, being 'fruit unto God.' Its first characteristic mark is to 'walk complete, entirely, or wholly' with God (for these are the ideas conveyed in the expression), or heart-allegiance and life-surrender, without reserve or self-seeking. However much we may fail in execution, yet whereas we formerly lived to ourselves, and God was not in all our thoughts, we now wish wholly and unreservedly to give ourselves—body, soul, and spirit—unto the Lord. Corresponding to this is the outward direction of life: 'he that worketh righteousness.' It is interesting to follow the etymological idea of the word 'righteousness' from its root, 'to be firm,' established, strong, to its twofold termination in 'truthfulness, reliableness, faithfulness;' and, on the other hand, in 'victory and prevailing.' Still more markedly spiritual and internal is the principle of all our conduct: 'he that speaketh truth in his *heart*.' This spiritual upright-

ness in our dealings with men is alike different from the selfishness of flattery, the callousness of deception, the carelessness of indifference, and the cruelty of sin. To speak truth in our *hearts* implies true feeling, as well as true speaking and true dealing. Such relations are based on our true relation to God. Because God became our Father, men became our brethren. It includes all loving *spiritual* interest and all holy carefulness towards them. Beginning at the *heart*, it manifests itself in the life. It is our *new* nature, and it becomes *natural* to us 'to love the brethren.' The question, 'who is my brother?' has long been answered. To put it anew only argues our estrangement from the 'elder Brother.' Yet how grievously do we fail in this matter, both in the highest and best sense, and in everyday life! Perhaps flattery more than any other sin has barred to multitudes the door of heaven. To be truthful *and loving*,—true because we love, and loving because we are true,—is indeed the 'work of righteousness.'

Scripture seems to attach special importance to the tongue, not only as (with many) the most active member, but because speech is the distinctive characteristic of men, and the tongue the organ wherewith we 'bless God, even the Father.' 'If any man offend not in word' (if he have learned heavenly wisdom there), 'the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.' Nothing could be more graphic than a literal rendering of the description of the sins of the tongue (ver. 3): 'he that goeth not about upon his tongue,' 'a busy-body in other men's matters' with the tongue: a habit this which often springs from idleness, and is carried on in carelessness, but has its real source in ignorance of ourselves, and

want of love. And now the moral description of evil deepens with the increasing danger. The expression, 'He that doeth not evil to his neighbour,' not only shows the progress of sin, but in the etymology of the word 'neighbour' (from 'being connected' or 'associated') exhibits its hatefulness and unnaturalness; and as if to designate the climax of the evil, it is described as 'bringing shame upon his neighbour' (literally, him 'who is near'). Few sins are more odious and yet more common than the light and uncharitable manner in which Christians speak of each other. Never let us speak of our neighbour to others as we would not speak of him to God. Prayer is the best test of truth and of charity. Speak in the tone of prayer even when you do not speak in the accents of prayer. For, if we love not our brother whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?

The first clause of ver. 4 has been rendered: 'Vile in his own eyes, contemned,' as referring to the grace of humility, so characteristic of believers. But grave reasons (derived from the text and context) decide for the more common rendering, which indicates a stage of Christian uprightness, too rare in its attainment. Not to judge by outward appearance, but to judge *righteous* judgment; not to hold men's persons in esteem for the sake of filthy lucre, not to be swayed in our choice and likings by worldly considerations, needeth a very vivid sense of spiritual realities. Plain as it may seem, it is given as one of the promises of better days, that 'the vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful.' Whenever I am tempted unduly to esteem the world's influence, unsanctified talent, and the mere pos-

session of wealth, let me remember how little these can either accomplish or prevent. 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.' But 'the Lord abideth for ever.' Prayer can bar or unlock the floodgates of heaven, and faith can remove mountains. To honour them 'that fear Jehovah' is to honour Jehovah Himself, who will be 'admired in His saints.' Any one of God's little ones deserves and should secure our respect, as being of 'the heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.'

Thus, having victory over the world, 'even our faith,' we are able through grace for the proper discharge of duty, even under difficulties and temptations. Having the one Master, we are set free from the 'lords many' who keep the men of this world all their lifetime in bondage. True Christianity shows itself equally in all the relations and circumstances of life. Personal loss cannot decide us in our course of action ; personal gain may not influence us ; personal considerations do not determine us. The threefold characteristics mentioned in vers. 4 and 5 are to be regarded as representing so many lines of relationship and conduct. Grace pervades the whole man, and gracious motives are ever present. There are many obligations which seem to threaten loss and hurt ; yet they are on that ground none the less binding. In questions of duty it is always dangerous to forecast consequences. Satan is a much better logician than any of us, and if we give place to calculation it will not be difficult somehow to arrive at the conclusion that we are at liberty to change. There are few, if any, real duties, in opposition to inclinations, which do not seem to involve self-sacrifice and 'hurt.' Yet may this also

be carried to opposite extremes. Nothing can be really incumbent upon us which is not in accordance with God's holy will and revealed mind. Here, as in everything else, the rule must be to live and act as in His sight, yet with a deep and humbling sense of our own weakness and shortcomings, and with earnest application for pardon of our sins through the peace-speaking blood of Jesus.

If it is difficult to avoid the calculations of selfishness in the form of fear, it is still more so not to yield to them under the guise of advantage. Not to do what lieth to us from fear of hurt is one danger ; to do what lieth to us—or, perhaps, sometimes what does not lie to us—from self-interest, or from sordid motives, is another, and a greater and more subtle danger. We surround ourselves with such a mist of sophistry that we fail to perceive our actions in their true light. Much that looks kind is but selfish, and the warning against 'giving his money in usury' (literally, that which 'cuts in' or 'bites') must be taken in the implied contrast of the words 'give' and 'biting,' and as illustrated in Luke vi. 32-36. Christian beneficence is the *free* outgoing of a heart which has found peace in Jesus, and learned to *love*. The question of return never enters into that of working for the Lord. Here, as in all things, the great object is to serve the Lord *directly*, through the channels which He opens, whether it be in His poor, in His sick, in His suffering, or even in the unthankful. So long as we help *man*, or do it as unto man, we have missed the right, evangelical motive and principle. A Christian is one who views all things, feels all things, and does all things, as *in Christ*. 'To me to live is Christ.' But

perhaps the most difficult attainment is so to be set free from all personal considerations in our opinions and judgments as to resist all positive allurements, and thus to enter into the *spirit* of the warning, 'not to take a present, or a bribe, upon the innocent.' For there are bribes of various kinds, and different modes of taking them. It is undoubtedly true of the world that 'every man has his price.' The Christian is free, because he has been ransomed. Let us, therefore, not again be brought into bondage to beggarly elements. Extreme watchfulness over our own hearts, and cultivation of fellowship with God, are here requisite. Nor is there any one who has not reason to be humbled in His sight, and to seek grace more fully to walk in the Spirit, even as we live in the Spirit.

Most precious and comforting is the conclusion of this Psalm: 'He that doeth these things will not *be allowed* to be moved to eternity' (as we would correctly paraphrase the construction by means of the italicised verb). Even so—grace will sustain and maintain us. He taketh care of His people. Peter, though violently shaken, will not be allowed to be moved, for the great High Priest has prayed for him. He will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but will, with the temptation, give a way of escape. In looking forward we should ever cherish faith in His providence, as designed to co-operate with His grace. 'Lead us not into temptation,' is a prayer daily and literally heard. 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered.' We shall not be allowed to be moved to all eternity. He will 'perfect and stablish' us. We have an Advocate at God's right hand,

who ever pleadeth for us and watcheth over us. 'For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was *in all points* tempted like as we are, yet without sin.'

1. Why should we be cast down when there is a promise of *grace*? If we were left to ourselves we might well shrink from self-examination, and fear even after we had obtained pardon. But to fear *in view of grace* is not to believe. Freely all is given; fully all is given; lovingly all is given. The thought of grace should indeed *transport* us. It is in the nature of grace to meet every one, and to meet him wherever he be. There was no greater claim to grace in the case of Paul than there is in my case. Grace is its own reason. It springs from the love of God in Christ Jesus, His Son. Grace does not indeed *equally* meet all, but all may equally have it. 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if *any man* hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.' I am not to reason on this promise, but to believe and to receive it. My question as to the '*how*' of its fulfilment shall be answered, or rather shall be met, when, like the man with the withered hand, I shall have stretched it forth at His command. Therefore, this day let me come in obedience to the call of mercy; *now*, let me believe—flee to Him, cleave to Him, and trust in Him—and live.

2. How precious is the redemption of the soul! Let me meditate on the value of it; let me realize an eternity of glory; let me now taste the joyousness of believing fellowship with Him. Truly earth's gold is but dross, and its joys

but toys. Thou, Lord, art Thyself the joy and strength of my soul. How soon will this shifting scene pass for ever—and what then? Nay, if I could only occupy till He come! How soon shall earth and her works be burnt up? ‘*Blessed* are all they that put their trust in Him.’ We live too much in time and for time. This day let me press closer, if it were but to touch the hem of His garment, for power goeth forth out of Him. Of all thoughts the most precious is that of walking with Jesus, here and hereafter. And now, Lord, art Thou near to me. Come and take me, and make me *wholly* Thine.

3. Yet our joy in prospect of eternity must not unfit nor indispose us for the duties of this life. It must encompass them as with a halo of glory. Let me remember in my daily walk that the inscription on the high priest’s mitre shall ‘in that day’ be even ‘upon the bells of the horses’ (Zech. xiv. 20). With most scrupulous care let me guard the issues of the heart. I must be a Christian in *all* I undertake and in all I do, as well as in all I believe and hope. Thus must I seek to glorify God, thus must I manifest the new nature, and not only as to its fruits, but also as to its character, let me ever bear in mind that it is a new nature, ‘created in *Christ Jesus* unto good works.’ Lord, live and reign in me, that I may live and reign with Thee!

Now, who is he? say, if ye can,
Who *so* shall gain the firm abode?
Pilate shall say, ‘Behold the Man!’
And John, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’

BARCLAY.

XXI.

HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP.

- 1 PRESERVE me, O God : for in thee do I put my trust.
- 2 O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord :
My goodness extendeth not to thee ;
- 3 But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all
my delight.
- 4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god :
Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into
my lips.
- 5 The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup : thou main-
tainest my lot.—PSALM XVI.

THIS is a precious Psalm of the Church and her King. It is true of the Church, because it became true in Christ, and it was true of Christ, because He was the Head of the Church. In all their fulness and literality the promises which it contains applied to Christ (Acts ii. 29-32 ; xiii. 35-37), and because they were ' Yea and Amen ' in Him, did they apply to David, and to all who like him call Jesus Lord. It is this identification of the Church with Christ, and of Christ with the Church, which forms so large a part of the Messianic element in the Psalms. And, perhaps, from the very dimness of their knowledge, did Old Testament saints realize, even more than we,

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this covenant unity of the Head with the members. There is a gradual rising in these aspirations until seemingly the two elements almost commingle, if we may so say, in a manner analogous to the union of the two natures in Christ. What is said to us, is true in Christ ; what is promised to us is held out in Christ. And it is our joy to have all things bound up in Christ. This identification with Jesus is the very corner-stone of our hope.

At the outset we note, that the utterances of this Psalm are rather those of a *representative* man than of David or of any other 'sweet singer of Israel,' and that they were a prayer in dark and troublous times. It seems as if apprehensions of death and destruction had called forth this song in the night. And so it ever is trial which tries and proves our confidence. Times of sorrow are precious seed-times preparatory for harvests of glory. Because the God-man suffered, His sufferings and His triumph become ours. At the same time, we cannot fail to remark how the confident expectation that we shall not be allowed to be moved (Ps. xv. 4), shapes itself here into prayer (Ps. xvi. 1), and again expresses itself in the language of joyous faith (ver. 8). For what we expect from Divine grace, we ask ; and what we ask, we ask in faith. How sweet to the believer thus to press forward, and while he recognises himself in the language of his representative, to look up to Jesus through the long vista of those who in the morning have anointed their Beth-el pillow with the oil of gladness. The Master Himself rested by this fountain and drank of its waters. And of Him, and through Him, those promises are true.

Blessed be God, earth in its present state is not our home. Not a footbreadth is ours, and yet *all* things are ours, both life and death, time and eternity. Our souls are sin-stained, yet washed clean; our steps faltering, yet we are immovable; our bodies also are decaying, yet their dust is precious. It is this hope which gives such calmness and joy. 'The forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus,'—entered as the forerunner, and entered *for* us. Our Joshua has given us rest. Accordingly, in view of the sharpest conflicts and trials, this Psalm breathes not the language of fear nor despondency, but even more than others that of joyousness and triumph, so that, as one has said, 'the cry for help becomes scarcely audible for the abounding sense of blessedness and the peacefulness of hope.' And so it ever is. An *abundant* entrance is ministered unto us: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' Yet do we ever begin with prayer. 'Preserve me' (or keep me, watch over me), 'O God, for in Thee do I put my trust' (literally, 'in Thee have I sought refuge'). The Lord watches over and thus preserves His people. On the ground of having sought refuge in Him, may we plead for needed grace. We have 'a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us.' It is very sweet so to lean on the arm of the Beloved, and so to have in the past the pledge of the future. And now it seems as if his whole soul became absorbed in the contemplation of God. Prayer merges into praise: 'O my soul, thou hast said to *Jehovah*: my Lord art Thou; my good' (my weal) 'is not out of Thee' (nothing beyond or beside Thee). There is a spiritual ex-

clusiveness here which counts 'all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' It is the law spiritualized, or rather the perfect law of liberty written on the fleshly tables of the heart. For to the address: '*I am* Jehovah thy God,' the soul responds, 'Thou art my Lord;' and to the command: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me,' it graciously answers, 'My good is not out of Thee.' 'To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' Here, then, the Old Testament Thomas has put his fingers into the prints of the nails, and adoringly confesses, 'My Lord and my God!' What a blessed resting-place is this to reach—to be quiet in God, and to find all in Him! We now enjoy real calm, for we possess all that we want or desire. Such believing acknowledgment of God in Christ, and such implicit surrender to Him, always leads to peace and joy. The sphere beyond God is emptiness and vexation of spirit. 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' Jesus is 'the pearl of great price.'

Since his treasure is in heaven, the delight of the believer is with those who 'bear the image of the Heavenly.' 'To the saints that are in the earth' (perhaps in continuation of ver. 2, 'O my soul, thou hast said'): 'They are the excellent' (or rather, the glorious, the word being derived from the verb *to shine*), 'all my delight is in them.' The love of God and the love of the brethren; holiness and glory are here conjoined. This is indeed a believing view of men and matters, such as one might take ere crossing Jordan. All God's children are *saints*. 'Holiness for ever becometh Thine house.' And they are shining or glorious in the robe of His

righteousness and in the garment of His salvation. 'Christ loved the Church,' and Christians love the Church. There is no sectarianism here; it is Jesus who is loved in His people. The meanest of God's saints *is* one of God's saints. And specially mark the warmth and freshness of affection, which recognises and owns His glory even under the guise of human poverty and weakness. Surely this Psalm could not be true out of Christ.

Yet earth is a place of dim vision and broken fellowship. We may not make tabernacles here, even though it were for Jesus, Moses, and Elias. It is good to be here, but not to remain here. We are strangers and pilgrims, as all our fathers were. The Church is a little as well as a despised flock. 'Their sorrows shall be multiplied who exchange another' (or, by exchange, purchase another)—the idea and terms corresponding to Jer. ii. 11: 'but My people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.' Such folly leads to such sorrow. Yet, alas, how common is it! And still there is not another. 'I, even I, am Jehovah; and besides Me there is no Saviour.' In such circumstances, holy separation in religion and life is not only our duty, but, as it were, the necessity of our new nature. 'I will not pour forth their drink-offerings of blood, nor will I take up their names upon my lips.' Whether their offerings be the result of violence and blood, or be mingled with blood, all sacrifices which are not those of a broken heart are an abomination to the Lord. We must not be 'partakers with them' in their evil deeds. It is not hatred, but dread, which here expresses itself. Under the apprehension of the judgment which will

certainly overtake all workers of iniquity, we must hasten forth beyond the boundaries of the doomed city. All is not religion which seems such. There are even drink-offerings which are 'of blood.' Where the heart is estranged from God, and exchanges Him for 'another,' whoever that other may be, their very 'table' becomes 'a snare' to them. In holy contrast to those 'which have their portion in this life,' the believer asserts his character and claim as one of the 'kingdom of priests' in whom the Levitical type was fulfilled: 'I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel' (Num. xviii. 20). 'Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance' (that which is numbered to me, or falls to me of possession) 'and of my cup; Thou maintainest my lot.' The possession which he inherits by allotment in virtue of his new birth, is Jehovah Himself. Again, as one of the children, he becomes a member of 'the household of God;' he is admitted to the King's table, and there the Lord as a Father dispenses to him 'the portion of his cup,' which is none else than Himself. Jehovah our *permanent* inheritance; Jehovah our *daily* sustenance, the wine of our cup—for refreshment, strength, and joy. This is 'the new wine' of the kingdom. And in this does the soul make her boast, loudly proclaiming its sufficiency. Yet is this also of *grace*. We have not chosen Him, but He has chosen us; it is not the labour of our hands, but 'the portion of our inheritance and of our cup.' And what grace has given grace preserves, preparing it for us, and us for it. 'Thou maintainest my lot.' Thus in daily dependence upon Him, in daily fellowship with Him, are we trained for 'the inheritance of the saints

in light.' From first to last we owe all to grace ; from first to last we find all in Jehovah ; from first to last are we directed out of ourselves to Him.

I. The connexion between faith and prayer is exceedingly close. Prayer is the language of faith, and faith is the result of prayer. Each 'In Thee do I put my trust,' has a 'Preserve me, O God,' for its *therefore* ; and each cry for preservation results in the joyous assurance, 'Thou art my Lord.' Thus our faith is not a barren speculation, nor the knowledge of some truths, but the upward look of a soul which has found in Christ its Saviour. The air which it breathes is fellowship with God, even the Father. From its very nature, faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things unseen, is cast upon prayer for its continuance. From its origin, faith, which is 'the gift of God,' is obliged to live upon prayer. When I cease to pray, I must cease to believe ; and when I cease to believe will I cease to pray. Accordingly, the one forms an accurate test of the other. All that scripturally I believe, may and should I ask for ; and all that scripturally I ask, may and should I believe. Prayer is the privilege of faith ; the shaking off all hindrances, and claiming all that has been assigned in the covenant of grace ; and faith is the pledge and earnest that what we have asked will be granted. Therefore let me make free application of it. If by grace I am now enabled to put my trust in Jesus as my Saviour, let me ask for preservation. The grace of endurance and the grace of perseverance are given in answer to believing prayer. How many are the dangers and the sins from which I require to be guarded ; how precious is the

preservation of my soul, which includes my separation unto Him; and how blessed the assurance that such faith and prayer will be followed by that peace which consists in intense satisfaction with Jesus as all-sufficient for me!

2. But am I really conscious of this exclusiveness of possession in God? When my soul is in a healthy state, I require not to be reminded that Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance, nor to be admonished to make Him now the portion of my cup. The soul quickened by grace has such lively views of Divine things, and such blessed enjoyment of Him, that it rises to Him in virtue of a felt necessity of His presence. Is this the case with me? What are my anticipations of the future, and what my feelings with reference to the present? Nor is it needful to attain a very high elevation in order to cherish such feelings. They consist not in realizing what *we* have, but what *He* hath. It is joy not in ourselves, but in Christ. And this joy is consistent with, nay, it implies, the humblest views of our own attainments and ability. '*Thou maintainest my lot.*' Thus all the glory is His. Day by day do we feel how difficult it is to keep these feelings fresh upon our hearts; and day by day do we bless God, who, both by His providence and by His grace, by trials and by comforts, loosens the bands which bind us to earth, and more firmly draws those which connect us with heaven. We are 'strangers and pilgrims.' Surely, not the one without the other. To be a stranger without being a pilgrim were morbid misanthropy; to be a pilgrim without being a stranger were empty profession. The one marks our relation to earth, the other our relation to heaven.

Strangers as being pilgrims, and pilgrims as being strangers—thus let us have grace to overcome, by being overcome by the constraining love of Christ.

3. Yet a third mark of our citizenship, besides believing prayer and delight in God, is our esteem and affection for God's people. Our regard for them appears in our estimate of 'the saints,'—'the excellent.' These are days in which believers are more especially exposed to the sneers of the world; and mockery is more difficult to bear than even persecution. We would range ourselves on the side of God's people, irrespective of any consequences. There are some who are always ready to bring railing accusations against God's people, or to join in them. Even though their failings were all that is said by some, I remember the solemn warning in the case of Ham. And, like Moses, would I prefer to suffer persecution with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Let 'the saints' be my chosen companions. Fellowship with God's people is next only to fellowship with God Himself. And this day let me in heart and prayer seek to enjoy *both*, in anticipation of that eternal day with Christ and the saints!

SOMETIMES a light surprises
The Christian while he sings :
It is the LORD who rises
With healing in His wings.
When comforts are declining,
He grants the soul again
A season of clear shining
To cheer it after rain.

Hymnologia Christiana.

XXII.

CHRIST OUR FORERUNNER.

- 6 THE lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage.
7 I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel ;
My reins also instruct me in the night seasons.
8 I have set the Lord always before me :
Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth ; my flesh also shall rest in hope :
10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ;
Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life : in thy presence is fulness of joy ;
At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.—PSALM XVI.

THE more closely we view our heavenly inheritance, the more humbling and sad appear our low and carnal views concerning it. We can understand how those who have no better hope cling with every fibre of their hearts to this world, but it is passing strange that Christians should cherish such high views of the world, and such low views of God and of heaven. Is it so, that while the Bridegroom tarrieth, even the wise virgins slumber and sleep ; or are we content so far to live below our privileges as to keep always only just above the point of starvation ? And here it is most important to bear in

mind that the main part of our religion consisteth not in escape from eternal destruction. This, indeed, is our first necessity, and those who speak lightly of such experience have forgotten that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' But it is only its *beginning*, not its sum and substance. A religion which is only the offspring or the embodiment of fear is not that of liberty, far less of joy. To be set free from the wrath to come is indeed a marvel of grace, which may well call forth our never-ceasing song of gratitude. Yet is it, so to speak, only the negative part of our religion. Our joy lies not merely in this, that we have escaped, but in what we have found ; not merely in what has been taken from us, but in what has been given to us. This contrast is most fully brought out in Isa. lxi. 3. Not negative, but positive good calls forth our gratitude and love, and this in proportion as it is believingly realized. Here, perhaps, also is the secret of our strength. And in connexion with this matter it is very marked that the one aspect of our religion is chiefly *subjective*, the other chiefly *objective* ; the one presents what we need for our safety, the other what He is and what He gives for His own glory. And truly, most wondrous condescension is it that God gives Himself to us—not only hereafter, but even now, in our spiritual provision and in our spiritual joy. All that He is in Christ, He is *to* us, and *for* us. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money : come ye, buy and eat : yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.' 'Eat, O friends ; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.'

When the soul has realized this fulness of all possession in

Christ, it breaks forth into singing. No language can be too strong and no expectation too great for those the lot of whose inheritance and the portion of whose cup is Jehovah Himself. Truly, we cannot but show forth His praises,—all the more when at the same time we realize our position and desert by nature. So far as our present state is concerned, ours is the experience of vers. 6, 7 ; so far as our future hope is concerned, ours is the expectancy of vers. 9, 10. Therefore, whether present or future, we cherish the joyous conviction of ver. 11. ‘The lines’ (or measuring lines) ‘are fallen unto me in pleasant places ; yea, I have a goodly heritage’ (literally, also mine inheritance is resplendent above me). ‘Thenceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day ; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.’ And such clear views had even Old Testament saints of their possession here, and of their inheritance hereafter. Faith which reposes in the simplicity of perfect confidence upon the Lord—not leaning upon its strength, nor drawing its encouragements from its own actings—cherishes not doubt. Doubts are clouds which, passing between Christ and our souls, hide the view of Him. It is in measure as we look *within*, instead of looking *without*, that we give place to fear. It almost seems as if the nearer in our spiritual apprehension we come to Christ, the more the horizon becomes enlarged and the view unclouded (vers. 9, 10). We reach the sphere of certainty and of praise when we lay hold on the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is also noteworthy how assurance and a feeling of the sovereignty of grace are conjoined. If

imparted by the Spirit of God, that doctrine will not distress, but humble, and therefore lift us up. 'I will bless Jehovah, who hath given me counsel.' This counsel cometh of the Lord, and eternal thanks are due unto Him who by His grace and Spirit has so enlightened our minds in the knowledge of His dear Son, and quickened our hearts to receive the truth in the love of it. That surely is a very deep and lively feeling of joy in the Lord which leads to thanksgiving not only by day, but also by night. 'My reins also instruct me in the night seasons.' Nor, though primarily applicable to the night in its literal sense, is it necessary to confine it to that. In seasons of prosperity and of adversity we equally joy in our present possession and in our future inheritance. Of that no power on earth or in hell can rob us. Nay, all events, however seemingly untoward, only tend increasingly to show us its reality and value, and to deepen our hold upon it. It were indeed difficult, so to speak, to keep pace with this joyous upward flight. 'I have set Jehovah always before me.' This is true spiritual purpose, and true spiritual strength. The face turned towards Him, the eye fixed upon Him, now and at all times—such is the habit, and such the irrepressible longing of the soul. Like Israel of old, we move and we rest with the ark. Yet this also is not our own. 'Because *He* is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.' To free grace we owe continuance in grace. Like Peter, we are ready to sink, were it not for the arm of His power, and were not that Hand stretched forth at the right moment. And on this Power we can always lay hold. Such is the covenant of grace that it makes

provision for all necessities, and that every provision is of Him and in Him. They who fear have not well learned the blessedness of believing. But let us add to our faith diligence. 'Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation.' 'Therefore, mine heart has been glad, and mine honour' (or soul—the soul being our honour) 'shall jubilee, also my flesh' (or body) 'shall dwell unto safety' (or security, derived from a verb which originally means to be wide, extended, or comprehensive). With gratitude we mark, that the prospect of joy and safety extends to all the component elements of our being—spirit or heart, soul or honour, and flesh or body. In fact, it is the realization of the apostolic prayer (1 Thess. v. 23): 'I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' And this hope is held on the same ground as that of David: 'Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.' Thus while our heart has rejoiced, our soul, which in that day will really be our 'honour,' shall jubilee. And our body also shall dwell in safety and to safety—both in the sense of security and final dominion over the earth. But it were a mistake to suppose that this promise refers only to our *dead* bodies. The expression, 'my flesh shall dwell in safety,' is general, and applies to our bodies, whether living or dead. It includes our 'rest in hope,' but also our service in hope. Again, this promise with reference to our bodies terminates not with the grave, but extends beyond it to the blessed resurrection. Our body (both now and hereafter) shall be preserved blameless, as well as our spirit and soul, unto the coming of the Lord. The reasoning by which he arrives at this conclusion is pre-

eminently one of faith. 'For Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol' (or Hades). I am inclined to suppose that the expression here translated *soul* includes, if not the whole *life* of man (body, soul, and spirit), at least his spiritual part. Indeed, it might be rendered by the word 'life.' The Lord will not leave or surrender us to the power of the grave. So far as our Head was concerned it is noteworthy that Peter (Acts ii. 27), renders this promise : 'Thou wilt not leave my soul *into* Hades' (in the original). Because He was not surrendered or left *into* Hades, are we not left *to* Hades. One step more and the climax is reached : 'Thou wilt not give Thine Holy One to see *corruption*' (for so we would render the term in preference to '*the grave*' (although the two ideas coincide). What was true of Christ in a unique sense is true of all His people. Precious dust shall be gathered ; sown in dishonour, it is raised in honour. We now see how David has left all fear far behind him, and is more than conqueror through Him that conquered. In view of this final victory—'the last enemy' 'overcome'—we have perfect liberty, security, and joy. Neither life nor death can separate from God those for whom Christ died. Grace binds them to Him who is the living and the life-giving God. 'Thou wilt show me' (literally, cause me to know, to experience, or even to feel) 'the path of life'—in the widest sense, both of His teaching and of His guidance in it. Higher, yet higher does the enrapt vision rise, beyond the pearly gates, where faith gives place to sight, and prayer to praise. 'In Thy presence is fulness of joy ;' literally, 'satisfying' (satiation) 'of joys is with Thy face' (in the fellowship of it). One view of Him

whom we love and worship, even here fills and satiates the soul with joy. What when no cloud nor veil shall intervene, and no sin nor unbelief disturb! And yet, though satisfied and filled, there will be constantly fresh bestowal out of that infinite fulness which is in Him. 'Pleasures' (delights) 'in Thy right hand for ever,'—the word for *eternity* here used being derived from one which signifies to bind, to conquer, and hence to continue. Thus, with the vision of glory, in the full blaze of its light, and in the full enjoyment of its blessings, closes this truly apocalyptic Psalm of Christ and His Church.

I. Let me think of the *character* and *disposition* of God's people. Truly, it is all of grace, and because it is of grace let us seek to stand by *prayer*. We have made the Lord our refuge, and He will preserve us. How fully is this prayer destined to be answered, when not only our heart shall rejoice and our honour jubilee, but our very flesh shall dwell in safety. Christ has redeemed the whole man; the Holy Ghost maketh the whole man His temple; and the Father preserveth the whole man. And in this sense also must we exhibit corresponding fruits. The Lord is our only 'good,' and all gifts, blessings, and privileges which we enjoy, whether temporal or spiritual, come to us *directly* from God. I may have my larder full and my table spread, yet I pray none the less earnestly than my poorest brother, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' My manna comes from heaven every day, and well may it be called *manna*—'What is this?'—as expressive of its heavenly origin. Again, it becomes us, as God's elect, to separate ourselves, not from

intercourse but from fellowship with the world, and that in its most attractive forms. 'Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity against God?' With all their observance of outward ordinances, deep-seated in their hearts is alienation from Him. There cannot be a covenant between us and them,—there ought not even to be a truce.

2. The delight of the soul in realizing its heavenly portion is almost unbounded. There is a true contempt of the world—not of men, but of worldly elements—which is the necessary sequence of our intense satisfaction with the heavenly inheritance. And ever and again do we joy to refer all to Him who is 'the Author and the Finisher' of our faith. Along with this let us cherish the spiritual determination to 'set Jehovah always' before us. Most of our doubts and difficulties arise from neglect of this. To have a *single eye* is the condition of being full of light. Lord, let me not seek mine own; let me be jealous for Thee; what affects Thy cause and kingdom affects me; keep me close to Thyself, nay, be *Thou* at my right hand for ever!

3. Though I should not cherish morbid feelings concerning this life, as if it were not the best state for me at present, nor a morbid desire to lay down my armour ere the battle is finished, let me ever and again refresh myself with thoughts of the victory, the home, and the rest. Thus shall I best be nerved for the strife. And what carefulness of walk becomes me; nay, what high dignity attaches even to the body, in view of God's provision for us, whom He has redeemed, body, soul, and spirit. That is not common which bears the impress of the King's property. That should be kept pure and

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bright which is destined for the Master's household. We often fail, because we fail to realize our dignity and privileges. O that I had grace to live this week, this day, as in view of 'the inheritance of the saints in light!' Out of that fulness of joy which is in Thy presence, let me now have enough for comfort, for strength, and for refreshment; and evermore give me to drink of this water!

JESUS my Redeemer lives,
Christ my trust is dead no more;
In the strength this knowledge gives,
Shall not all my fears be o'er;
Calm, though Death's long night be fraught
Still with many an anxious thought?

Jesus my Redeemer lives,
And His life I too shall see:
Bright the hope this promise gives,
Where He is I there shall be.
Shall I fear, then? Can the Head
Rise and leave the members dead?

I shall see Him with these eyes,
Him whom I so truly know;
Surely I myself shall rise,
With His love my heart shall glow:
Only then shall disappear
Weakness which besets me here.

LOUISA OF BRANDENBURGH.
(*Lyra Germanica.*)

XXIII.

THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK.

- 1 HEAR the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry ;
Give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.
- 2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence ;
Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.
- 3 Thou hast proved mine heart ; thou hast visited me in the night ;
Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing :
I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.
- 4 Concerning the works of men,
By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.
- 5 Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.
- 6 I have called upon thee ; for thou wilt hear me, O God :
Incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.
- 7 Show thy marvellous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand
Them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them.
- 8 Keep me as the apple of the eye ; hide me under the shadow of thy wings,
- 9 From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass
me about.
- 10 They are enclosed in their own fat : with their mouth they speak proudly.
- 11 They have now compassed us in our steps ;
They have set their eyes bowing down to the earth ;
- 12 Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey,
And as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.
- 13 Arise, O Lord ; disappoint him, cast him down :
Deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword :
- 14 From men which are thy hand, O Lord,
From men of the world, which have their portion in this life,

And whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure :

They are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.

15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness :

I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. — PSALM XVII.

THERE is deep truth in the remark of one that 'in explaining this and some of the other Psalms, the left eye must be so fixed on David that the right eye looks to Christ.' For without such steadfast 'looking to Jesus' we cannot either understand the plea, the petitions, or the hope of this 'Prayer of David.' In the form of supplication, or as applied to present circumstances and wants, it breathes the same spirit as Psalm xvi., so that some have even been inclined to consider the two as organically connected. We regard it as a firm and sure application of the gracious hopes which the believer cherishes in Christ. There is a twofold victory granted to our faith. We *shall* conquer, and we *have* conquered. For 'faith is the *substance* of things *hoped for*, the *evidence* of things *not seen*.' We have not only the certain hope of *future* deliverance, but we have already the enjoyment of felt superiority and happiness in the possession of Christ. The future is only an unfolding and application of the present, for Christ is not only the pledge but the first-fruits of the 'all things' which are ours. Therefore we 'rejoice always,' 'in tribulations also,' and that as in this Psalm, 'with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

Beginning in 'the depths,' faith climbs here to the utmost height (ver. 15), and achieves its triumph by setting over against the inheritance of this world (ver. 14) that of the kingdom of God. Nor let us forget that this height is reached

by the ladder of prayer. Its lowest step, however, is also on the Rock (ver. 1). There is neither hesitancy nor doubt about the petition. 'But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.' In fact, the general tenor of this Psalm sounds very much like James i., said on our knees. There is no self-righteousness in the plea, 'Hear, Jehovah, righteousness.' For 'the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.' God's people are righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ; they are also righteous in another important sense, having cleansed themselves 'from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.' It were unbelief to pray in any other than the name of Jesus; it were blasphemy to pray for any other than the cause of 'righteousness.' Righteousness *upon* me, and righteousness *within* me, both of grace and through faith, are the conditions of all real prayer. Nor are such feelings inconsistent with the deepest sense of guilt. They are supplemented and further explained by another 'prayer' and 'Psalm of David' (cxliii. 2): 'Enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.'

It almost seems as if the prayer to 'hear' were explained by the expression, 'my cry,' namely, of anguish and distress, and the term 'righteousness' by the addition, 'not out of feigned lips.' Inward truth is perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of sanctification. That what I profess and ask is really the expression of my convictions and feelings, or spiritual sincerity may be taken as a test of our religion.

And yet it is very remarkable that just as He who cast out devils, and came to destroy the works of the devil, was called 'Beelzebub,' so God's people should be chiefly charged with hypocrisy. But in this case, also, a very important end is subserved by the Divine permission of so unfounded a calumny. For it points out the necessity of cultivating deep inward truthfulness, thoroughness of religion, and decision of religious bearing.

The feeling expressed in ver. 2 is couched in the original in the *future* tense, implying rather hope than prayer. The 'judgment' for which we look is to 'come forth from before Thy face.' There is something peculiarly awful as well as precious, in the idea of Jehovah so hearing and so beholding. For this are we content to wait. Meantime, trials have yet another effect. Through them, God, as it were, opens our hearts, looks into us, and leads us also to look into ourselves (ver. 3). A most searching probation and visitation this—the expression, 'Thou hast *tried* me,' being that used for the testing, melting, and purifying of precious metals. The result is the spiritual determination: 'Thou shalt find nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.' The first effect of trial is to lead us to acknowledge His hand, the next to turn us inwards. And thus is there fruit unto holiness. Then the soul rises in earnest entreaty and strong faith to Him for deliverance. So far from any element of spiritual pride entering into this 'turning inside out' before God, we deeply realize that it is only 'by the word of Thy lips' that we keep ourselves from the paths of the destroyer. Sin is really destruction, literally, breaking through, tearing down;

and the only way to keep from it is to keep close to the Word. Then truly becomes it 'a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.' 'Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.' Finally, in opposition to all self-reliance, this section closes most appropriately with the prayer of ver. 5.

Thus, between alternate confession and profession has the prayer advanced, till full wide before it opens a view of the faithfulness and covenant mercy of our God. The path has now become 'plain,' and all we need is to be led in it. Accordingly, this forms the burden of the next stanza. It opens with an emphatic assertion of allegiance in the past and confidence for the future; the expression, 'I have called upon Thee,' being equivalent to, 'But as for me,' and used in opposition to the men of the world. The reason of our giving ourselves to prayer is the conviction of an answer: 'for Thou wilt hear me, O God.' And this, in turn, leads to more earnest pleading: 'Incline Thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.' It is not easy to persevere in prayer, when answer seems so much delayed. How many of God's saints may have wept, believed, hoped, joyed, and prayed through this Psalm! The great day alone will show how many plants of righteousness have sprung up by each of these water-courses, and been nourished by them. The first point here is *inward* establishment and assurance in the Lord. Then, in God's own time, outward deliverance comes. And thus we reach the very kernel of this 'prayer,' which is for grace and deliverance. 'Show Thy marvellous loving-kindness' (make distinguished, exhibit as marvellous Thy grace), 'O Thou that

save by Thy right hand them which put their trust in Thee' (or, flee for refuge to Thee), 'from those that rise up against them.' So then it is sovereign grace, marvellous in its character, and distinguishing in its manifestations, for which David and the Church pray. And what 'name' and 'memorial' is this by which our God is known, as the Saviour of believers! 'The name of Jehovah is a strong tower; the righteous fleeth into it and is safe.' 'Flee to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope;' 'who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.' And this prayer do we mark for ourselves whenever our danger is peculiar or our hope becomes weak. If I have no other plea, let me have the prayer: 'Show Thy *marvellous* loving-kindness;' let it be a kind of miracle, Thou Saviour of the trustful. I *have* fled to Thee for refuge, and I do so flee. All appearances are against me; but the age of miracles is not past, so long as the God of miracles liveth. I have nothing, am nothing, can do nothing; but Thou hast all things, art all things, canst do all things. Then let it be grace, marvellous manifestation of grace, Thou Saviour Jesus. And God putteth honour upon such faith. The relation which in grace He has condescended to establish between Himself and us is of the closest and tenderest description. 'Keep me as the apple of the eye.' The mode of expression in the original is peculiar and difficult, and perhaps implies even more than the obvious but wonderful truth which it contains. 'Keep me' (or watch over me, guard me) literally, 'as the little man, the daughter of the eye.' The term 'little man' is commonly applied to the eye, because the image of another is reflected upon it. But in that case it

seems difficult to account for the addition of the other and different simile, 'daughter of the eye.' *Possibly* it may mean, 'Guard me as the little image on the *retina*;' and if so, the fulness of truths *implied* in the verse would be most strikingly brought out in the expression. Both this and the succeeding petition in ver. 7 are based on the promises, Deut. xxxii. 10, 11, and point forward to the words of the Saviour, Matt. xxiii. 37. The one petition refers to the tender care of Him in whose eye our image is always painted (as the names of the tribes were engraven on the high priest's breastplate); the other points to the perfect safety of believers. Nay, besides this, it implies cool, delicious shade, or comfort, under His outstretched wings. The relationship thus established enables us to take an estimate of our enemies different from the common (vers. 9-12). It finds appropriate utterance in the prayer of ver. 13: 'Arise, Jehovah, meet his face' (stand forth, or rush forth, before his face, interpose Thyself between me and that lion), 'cast him down' (literally, make him kneel down): 'deliver my soul' (literally, let my soul escape) 'from the wicked, Thy sword' (either in the sense, O Thou sword, or in that, 'by Thy sword').¹ The description of the heartlessness of enemies, 'they have shut up their fat' (equivalent to the expression, 1 John iii. 17, comp. Ps. cxix. 70; Isa. vi. 10);

¹ If not too bold, we might venture to imitate the abruptness of the original by thus rendering it literally :—

Jehovah, O arise :
Forward ! against his face,
And make Thou him kneel down.
Let Thou my soul escape
From the wicked, thou sword !

of their proud boastfulness, of their zealous hostility, and of their cruel determination ('they have set their eyes for the purpose of casting to the earth,' and again, ver. 12) has been only too frequently and strikingly verified in all ages of the Church. But most clear is the final appeal of ver. 14, where the contrast with the world is so fully marked. Resuming the argument of ver. 13, the suffering and waiting believer cries out for escape 'from men—who are Thyhand, O Jehovah!—from the men of the world' (the idea conveyed being that of temporal in opposition to the spiritual and eternal) 'whose portion is in this life.' This world is their home, their desire, and their possession. To love the world, to take ease, to eat and drink, forgetful of the warning, 'Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee,' has always been characteristic of the carnal mind. There was a Church within the church in the days of David, as there is in the latter days. Jacob's 'portion' is not like theirs; and herein appears the separation between the Church and the world.

It almost appears as if this critical moment of decision brought out with greater clearness than ever the hope of the believer. 'But as for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness, I shall satiate myself' (the original meaning being to drink in to the full, to overflowing) 'in awakening with Thy likeness.' This refers, unquestionably, to death and the resurrection. After the brief and troubled night of this life and dispensation, a future awaits us, so glorious that tongue cannot tell, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for His people. Yet our delights will in the main be of the same character as at present, only infi-

nately higher in degree. Besides, we shall be in His immediate presence, and free from the encumberment of sin, from the world, and from death, with all the evils which they represent,—justified, sanctified, glorified, beholding His glory, and on awakening satisfied to the full with His likeness! Well may such conviction uphold us, and, writing it as our portion over against that of the world, lead us to ‘purify ourselves’ unto Him ‘a peculiar people, zealous of good works.’

1. In all my difficulties let me have immediate recourse to the Lord. However low I may be brought, or fierce and powerful the opposition be, two things are left me—a prayer and a conviction. The prayer is, ‘Show Thy marvellous loving-kindness;’ the conviction, ‘Thou Saviour of the trustful.’ It may not be ordinary grace or deliverance which I may require. But there are marvels of grace, nay, grace itself is a marvel. Here, then, I am encouraged to ask *all* things. There is not a case conceivable which is not included in this petition. And as I may *ask* all things, so I may *believe* all things. For there is not a difficulty too great for ‘the Saviour of the trustful.’ Thus, it is alike my duty and my privilege to ‘pray without ceasing,’ and to look up in perfect confidence. There cannot be presumption in giving glory to God.

2. This day let me apply those blessed truths, and rise to the enjoyment of God’s provision in Christ Jesus my Saviour. ‘Faithful is He, who also will do it.’ The Lord Himself will fight for us. We comfort ourselves in Him. He keeps and guards us as the image painted on the eye; we have sweet shelter in the shadow of His wings. Let me consider what I have, and to what I owe it. Not better than others, Thou hast

called me by distinguishing grace, and led me to find refuge in Thee. And all that I possess, however sweet and precious, is only a foretaste of what Thou wilt give. This is the children's portion. We envy not the world, nor do we enumerate their riches with murmuring voice. But beyond all this grace which we now experience, is 'the glory to be revealed.' 'In awakening,' 'Thy likeness,' and 'satisfying to the full,' all this, and Thyself,—Lord, what more is needed, for Thy glory or my good?

3. But in thus pleading, waiting, trusting, and hoping, I must remember that holiness is the badge of adoption. God not only takes us to be His children, but makes us to be His children. These things must work out to me an 'exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' 'If I regard sin in my heart, God will not hear me.' There is such an exercise as that of holy vowing unto the Lord, 'I have purposed: my mouth shall not transgress.' Let me cultivate spiritual sincerity; let me seek to be wholly His who has wholly given Himself for me. Let me follow Jesus, and for this purpose let me cultivate more spiritual converse with 'the word' of His 'lips.' Let me receive it as fresh from His lips. May the Spirit speak it anew into my heart. Thus only shall I keep myself from 'the paths of the destroyer.' And this converse of God with me let it be accompanied by converse on my part with God. Let me seek daily grace to have 'my goings' upheld in His paths. 'But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

XXIV.

OUR SAFETY.

- 1 I WILL love thee, O Lord, my strength.
- 2 The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer ;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust ;
My buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.
- 3 I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised :
So shall I be saved from mine enemies.
- 4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.
- 5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about ; the snares of death prevented me.
- 6 In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God :
He heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.
- 7 Then the earth shook and trembled ;
The foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.
- 8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,
And fire out of his mouth devoured : coals were kindled by it.
- 9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down : and darkness was under his feet.
- 10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly ; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.
- 11 He made darkness his secret place ;
His pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.
- 12 At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed ; hail-stones and coals of fire.
- 13 The Lord also thundered in the heavens,
And the Highest gave his voice ; hail-stones and coals of fire.

- 14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them ;
And he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.
15 Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world
were discovered
At thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.
16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.
17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
And from them which hated me : for they were too strong for me.
18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity : but the Lord was my stay.
19 He brought me forth also into a large place ; he delivered me, because he
delighted in me.
20 The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness ;
According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

PSALM XVIII.

THIS Psalm, which in another version is recorded in 2 Sam. xxii., may be regarded as David's Pisgah view of his life. At the close of his earthly course he reviews all God's dealings with him in covenant-mercy, and then looks beyond them to the spiritual fulfilment in Christ Jesus of the gracious promise of establishing his throne. In its fullest sense this Psalm is true only of Christ and in Christ, and as such is twice expressly applied to our Lord (Heb. ii. 13 ; Rom. xv. 9). But it refers also to all 'who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.' For if we be like the Son of David, we also must be 'made perfect through suffering.' Yet how precious in each struggle to hear the voice of Jehovah, and in each trial to realize His hand—to feel that 'goodness and mercy have followed us all our

days!' And when at even we lay down our armour, may we be able on looking back to praise, and in looking forward to rejoice! But in order thus to identify ourselves with the final triumph of the blessed gospel, we must in our lives and labours have identified ourselves with the life and the work of Christ. And thus to identify our history with, and to read it as in Christ, is indeed to have a history.

The main object of this Psalm is to illustrate our vital union with Christ, the Son of David. The first part expresses His identification with us, the second our identification with Him. Because He thoroughly identifies Himself with us, our deliverance is so certain, so special, so marked, and so striking. Because we so thoroughly identify ourselves with Him, our strength is so great, our victory so decided, our triumph so continuous, and our hope and anticipation so spiritual. These two divisions of the Psalm, which some have described as presenting David as passive in the hands of God, and as active with Him, but which we have viewed as the twofold aspect of our identification with Christ in the covenant of grace, are clearly marked in the text (vers. 1, 31, and ver. 32 to the end). Both sections are prefaced by an expression of feelings corresponding to the experience which is to find utterance.

A most noble beginning is made in a profession which, without further introduction, seems to burst from the fulness of a grateful heart. There is no coldness here, no doubt nor hesitation. Of what the heart is full the mouth floweth over. Yet can even the weakest believer deeply sympathize with it. 'I will love Thee, Jehovah, my strength.' The term used for

love (which in this form occurs only in this passage) is expressive, not only of deep and tender, but of continuous, of close-clinging, and sustaining affection. Love such as that which joins the Church to her Lord has no parallel on earth, nor even in heaven. It is unique—deep, tender, continuous, close-clinging, and sustaining. And, as in the language of the bride (Song ii. 6), the profession of this love is joined with confession of our weakness and acknowledgment of His strength. It is remarkable that the word for '*strength*' is also unique. Very characteristically, it is derived from a verb originally denoting to tie firmly together. Again, our confession is twofold—of His fulness and of our emptiness ; of our love and of His grace. Our love towards Him, and His strength towards us, are inseparably joined. Our love to Him is unique ; our strength in Him is also unique. There is no other Rock like that of Jacob ; and thus, with the deepest sense of weakness in ourselves, yet by faith laying hold on Him who is our God in Christ, can we sing, and burst forth abruptly for very joy, 'I will love Thee, Jehovah, my strength.'

It has been aptly noted by one that the titles here given to our God are the fruit of sufferings. For in seasons of trial we learn rightly to know and to name our God. We then become acquainted with Him, 'not by the hearing of the ear,' but our eyes see Him. The finest gold is that which has passed again and again through the fire. Hence David calls God by names connected with the chief deliverances in his life. We also love to name ourselves by His name, and to designate Him in a manner analogous to that

of the 'God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' Hence, we speak of Jehovah-Jireh, Jehovah-Nissi, and Jehovah-Shalom. 'Jehovah, my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; my God, my Rock in whom I find refuge, my Shield, and the Horn of my Salvation, my high Fort.' Yet it should be remembered that these names express not merely past, but present experience. He *has* proved Jehovah, found Him such, therefore now and for evermore he applies to Him. Very touching are the reminiscences of former scenes and dangers in the history of the persecutions by Saul. This mountain and that rock were his bulwark and high fortress. Yet not they, but Jehovah in them. For straight through these natural means did he look up to the supernatural First Cause. And when the special occasion no longer existed, did he still call Jehovah by these names. So we also, in our believing review of the past. Even a heathen poet speaks of the pleasure of looking back upon past trials. Yet we look rather upon a present Saviour than a past affliction. 'To you, therefore, which believe, *He* is precious.' The expression, 'my God, my Rock in whom I find refuge' (or hide myself for refuge; the tense indicating continuance for the future), is peculiarly emphatic, as indicating deep joy and confidence, and as connected both with the past and the future of God's Israel. It reminds us of 'the stone of Israel' (Gen. xlix. 24); it occurs in the Song of Moses (Deut. xxxii. 4, 'The Rock'), from which, indeed, it seems to be taken; it recurs in Ps. xcii. 15, 'He is my Rock,' and again in 'the Song of the Lamb,' Isa. xxvi. 4: 'for in Jah Jehovah is the Rock of eternities,' corresponding to Eph. iii. 21: 'Unto

Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.' In all these cases it seems specially to point to the *faithfulness* of our God, and to *continuous* grace (the word itself being derived from *gathering* together, or heaping up that which therefore shall endure).

Such hope will of necessity lead to prayer, as in ver. 3. There is a peculiar tone about it. 'Upon the Praised One' (the Hallelujah'd) 'will I call, even Jehovah; and from mine enemies I shall be saved.' The prayer embodies assurance of answer; the very address to 'the Praised One' already conveys thanksgiving. Does not this review of David's life and faith seem almost the ripest of his Psalms, when, as one who knows God, he maketh request with the joy of assurance? (James i. 6, 7.) Our prayers are paralysed, if their utterance be trembling. Most assuredly we have not this world, and if our grasp of Him, or our trust in Him, be also uncertain, what is left us? Not with weapons carried in trembling hands shall we prevail in the contest. While discarding all fleshly help or deliverance, all the more we 'have hope toward God.' For, as Luther says, 'You cannot believe how powerful a remedy such praise of God is in times of danger. For as soon as you begin to praise God, the evil abates, the good courage increases, and calling upon God with confidence ensues. There are people who cry unto the Lord and are not heard (ver. 44). But why? Because when they called upon the Lord, they praised Him not, but resisted Him; they have not set the Lord before them, how sweet He is, but only looked at their own bitterness. . . . Let any one make trial of it, and commence to praise God, whenever

his heart sinks within him ; he will immediately feel relief.' And this title of God as 'the Praised One' frequently recurs in the Psalms. Thus, Ps. xlviii. 1, 'Great is Jehovah and the much Praised One, in the city of our God, the mountain of His holiness.' Ps. xcvi. 4, 'For great is Jehovah and the much Praised One ; to be feared is He above all gods.' Ps. cxiii. 3 and cxlv. 3 afford other parallel instances. In all these the praise of Jehovah is connected with His greatness,—His greatest greatness consisting in His condescension in grace as 'the Praised One' of His people. Thus the infinite greatness and the infinite love of Jehovah are ever combined in the covenant of grace. In view of all this, well might our Head Himself utter the words of ver. 2, as quoted in Heb. ii. 13.

Such confidence, indeed, is needed in view of the surrounding dangers. It is not ordinary enmity which we have to encounter, but that of 'the enemy of souls.' It is not ordinary deliverance for which we have to ask, but to be 'drawn out of many and great waters' (vers. 16, 17). 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' The fearful character of the conflict (vers. 4, 5) appears sufficiently from its origin—'death,' 'Belial,' and 'Sheol,'—and also from the threatening proximity of these 'sorrows,' 'floods,' and 'snares.' The believing heart can best realize what issues hang upon the conflict of David and 'David's Son.' And in some measure we all can enter into it as part of our own experience. All the more sublime is that picture of the deliverance (vers. 7-20) which followed in answer to the cry to

heaven (ver. 6). We mark in it the sympathy of nature as on Mount Sinai (ver. 7) ; the terribleness of His interposition (ver. 8) ; its personal character (ver. 9) ; its majesty (ver. 10) ; the darkness presented to His enemies (ver. 11) ; the fitful judgments (ver. 12-15) ; the signal power wherewith deliverance was wrought, as in the Red Sea (ver. 15) ; the Moses-character of the preservation (ver. 16) ; the Joshua-character of the contest (ver. 17) ; and the peculiarly Davidic or rather Christian aspect which it wears as gradually we emerge 'into a large place' (vers. 18, 19). The contrast appears now most strikingly between God and man. While in ver. 18 it is marked by '*but* Jehovah was my stay,' in ver. 19 deliverance is ascribed solely to sovereign grace : 'because He delighteth in me.' Conceive this 'Song of Moses and the Lamb' sung by the Church in the Jerusalem above, or upon the renewed earth ! Most accurately does it delineate the history of that Church, and, in a sense, of every member thereof. Surely such victory is worth contending for, praying, waiting, and suffering for. 'Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you ; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Nor let us in this connexion forget the prayer which immediately follows, 2 Thess. i. 11, 12.

But do we *really* believe in this final setting right of things, and hope for it, that is, do we 'patiently wait' for it ? There is this twofold error ever about us. We lose from view 'the

coming of the Lord,' and we join ourselves to the men of 'this generation.' Why should we dread the influence, the means, or the strength of this world, or why should we court them, if we make Jehovah our stay? Herein lies the mastery of the poor and weak, that they turn their view straight upwards. Contempt of the world, in its true and healthy sense, has its root only in realizing faith. In measure as we live in the world to come has this world lost its power over us. We look back to Moses, and think that we also have been drawn out of great waters. We think of the passage through the Red Sea, and remember that in our deliverance also 'the channels of the waters were seen.' We recall the contests of Joshua, and know that our Jesus also has conquered and delivered us from our strong enemies, and from them which hated us, for they were too strong for us. We think of Sinai, and we look forward to when 'once more' He will 'shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.' Above all, we remember Jehovah, our God in Christ, and stay ourselves upon Him.

1. What past deliverances of a spiritual character have I to mark? And how do I mark them? Ever to look through second causes directly to God is the characteristic of those who are spiritually taught. Surely there are events, phases, and deliverances in our history with which we connect special

names of Jehovah, because special manifestations of Him and special answers to our prayers. These are our 'holy places,' yet will we not worship at those shrines, for our God is the *living* God. They only prove as finger-posts to point to Him. Upwards, and ever upwards! A spiritual experience never belongs to the past; it is an eternal present. What He was, that He is, and will be, world without end. Above all, do we know Him as 'the Praised One,' the 'Much Praised?' Praise is the necessary result of grace. For what, then, have I to praise Him to-day? How do I praise Him? Why do I not praise Him better? How shall I learn to know Him more closely, and to praise Him more fully? And what a place will heaven be, the temple of eternal praise, and of the eternal 'Much Praised One!'

2. 'I will love thee, Jehovah, my strength.' Thou art Thyself the ground of my love; Thou art Thyself the capacity of my loving; all is in Thee. This is a precious resolve, to be written over the portal of the renewed heart and life. My review of the past traces Thee everywhere; and everywhere traces Thee in grace; and in Thy grace everywhere traces my safety. Beyond thee I cannot go. Thou hast loved me, and given Thyself for me; Thou hast become weakness to be strength to me; descended to me that I might ascend to Thee. O Calvary, O Cross, O blessed Jesus!—what wondrous grace! By the well of Samaria let me sit and drink of its water evermore!

3. Let me fully settle in my mind and heart the connexion between praise and prayer. There are times when I can see no light and feel no joy. Then let me pray, and let me

first ask light and liberty. Let me tell God of 'the darkness,' and 'the dark waters,' and 'the thick clouds.' Let me seek breath for prayer. Then let me realize the character of His grace, and the liberty of access which I enjoy, not for what I am or believe, but for what He is and for what He does. *He* prays really who prays assuredly. He pleads who pleads to purpose ; he asks who expects an answer. Nor let the question of my worthiness, or rather unworthiness, enter into it. *That* is met by the worthiness of my High Priest. I must keep Him in the fore and myself in the background. I must plead the blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel. Certainly, if I regard sin in my heart, God will not hear me. But I regard it not ; I look to Christ, not to sin nor to self. Him I seek, and Him 'I will love.' 'Let us draw near, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.' Consider what such realizing prayer can obtain from God, and stay not thine hand. 'Thou shouldst have smitten five or six times, thou hadst then smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it.' And finally, let me now in praying remember that doubt is not self-examination, nor despondency godly sorrow. Doubt is of the father of lies, but faith is of the Holy Ghost.

I WILL love Thee, all my treasure !
I will love Thee, all my strength !
I will love Thee without measure,
And will love Thee right at length.
Oh, I will love Thee, Light Divine !
Till I die and find Thee mine !

ANGELUS SILESIIUS.
(*Hymn from the Land of Luther.*)

XXV.

THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY.

- 19 HE brought me forth also into a large place ; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.
- 20 The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness ;
According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.
- 21 For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God.
- 22 For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.
- 23 I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.
- 24 Therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness,
According to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.
- 25 With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful ;
With an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright ;
- 26 With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure ;
And with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.
- 27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people ; but wilt bring down high looks.
- 28 For thou wilt light my candle : the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.
- 29 For by thee I have run through a troop ; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.
- 30 As for God, is way his perfect : the word of the Lord is tried ;
He is a buckler to all those that trust in him.
- 31 For who is God save the Lord ? or who is a rock save our God ?
- 32 It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.
- 33 He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places.
- 34 He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

- 35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation ;
And thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me
great.
- 36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.
- 37 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them ;
Neither did I turn again till they were consumed.
- 38 I have wounded them, that they were not able to rise : they are fallen under
my feet.
- 39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle :
Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.
- 40 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies,
That I might destroy them that hate me.
- 41 They cried, but there was none to save them ; even unto the Lord, but he
answered them not.
- 42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind ;
I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.
- 43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people ;
And hast made me the head of the heathen :
A people whom I have not known shall serve me.
- 44 As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me :
The strangers shall submit themselves unto me.
- 45 The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.
- 46 The Lord liveth ! and blessed be my rock ; and let the God of my salvation
be exalted.
- 47 It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me.
- 48 He delivereth me from mine enemies ;
Yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me :
Thou hast delivered me from the violent man.
- 49 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen,
And sing praises unto thy name.
- 50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king ; and sheweth mercy to his anointed,
To David, and to his seed for evermore.—PSALM XVIII.

THE spiritual relief experienced by the soul when implicitly turning to Jehovah for help, can scarcely be expressed in words. In proportion to the greatness of our

danger is the sense of mercy dispensed. Yet though the deliverance be equal in all cases, there is not always the same felt suddenness of transition. We need not doubt the genuineness of our conversion, because we have not passed through any particular phase of experience. Other gates lead into the Temple besides that called 'Beautiful.' All pass not through the same process, but all pass from death unto life. Some undergo a 'great fight of afflictions,' or pass through deep waters, while others are led in 'a plain path;' and the transition in their case may be so gradual that it is scarcely possible to fix the exact date of their conversion. What matters it, if only we are really 'born again?' *He* has various ways, and various purposes to accomplish; and 'manifold grace' is dispensed in Christ. Yet in the *results* of our experience we all agree. We know that whereas we were blind, now we see. We feel that 'He brought us up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, and established our goings. And he hath put a new song into our mouths, even praise unto our God.' Of all of us is it true (vers. 18, 19), 'They rushed forward against me in the day of my calamity,' 'but Jehovah became to me for a staff' (Ps. xxiii. 4). 'And He brought me forth to a wide place; He delivered me' (literally, He pulled or drew me out) 'because He had pleasure in me' (or, inclination towards me—the word originally meaning *to incline*). Here then is sovereign grace as the ground, and sovereign help as the result. Here also the two—His grace and our faith—are combined: 'Jehovah became to me for a staff.' To lean on Jehovah as upon our staff, is to be safe.

Most simple is the way of life. It requires neither strength, wisdom, nor goodness of our own; it implies no elaborate prayers; it calls not for the complicated arrangements of men. The soul makes its safety in God. To find this is to be '*brought into a large place,*' both so far as our finding of it is concerned, for faith is the gift of God, and so far as its result is concerned.

It almost seems as if in the following verses we heard the 'new song' put into his lips. There is not a tittle of self-righteousness in vers. 21-25, as has already been shown. (See Meditation XXIII.) The believer's description of God's mode of dealing lays down an eternal principle: 'Jehovah is rewarding me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands is He returning unto me.' Despite all failings there is inward truth. We may fall, but we cannot fall away; there are weaknesses, but there cannot be apostasy; and Jehovah is not returning unto us *because*, but *according to* the cleanness of our hands. This is a true principle: 'Now we know that God heareth not sinners,'—not in the sense of sinful men, but of sin-loving and sin-following men. The look upwards cannot at the same time be a look downwards. To 'wickedly depart from my God' is an impossibility to the new nature, marked in almost every word of its description. The reason of this appears in ver. 22: 'For all His judgments are before me, and His statutes I let not depart from me.' It is not our but His strength, supplied by constant intercourse with Him and meditation upon His word and His ways. Yet nothing short of such watchfulness will suffice. 'Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.'

All would be well if those who so morbidly dwell upon their feelings, to the distress of their souls and the weakening of their spiritual life, would rather break with the past (whatever it may have been), and anew, as if for the first time, rest upon God in Christ. 'Why seek ye the living among the dead?' Nor can it be either right or truthful to efface the essential difference of things by confounding the contest of the flesh and the spirit with the fundamental and wicked apostasy from God which characterizes the heart in a state of nature. Let us also remember that, so far from being incompatible with, the *profession* of ver. 23 is completed by the *confession* of Ps. li. 3, 'My sin is ever before me.' Moreover, the expression is illustrated by ver. 24: 'And I am wholly with God, and I carefully keep myself from mine iniquity.' The entireness of his heart-direction towards the Lord, and of his heart-fellowship with God, is evidenced by his careful watching against all besetting sin. Both are true—perfect in Christ, and perfecting into Christ. Assurance of rest in Christ only makes us the more watchful, and watchfulness breaks not up our assurance. We work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is He who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Nor does the fact that besetting sin still daily and hourly threatens us afford ground for doubting our interest in Christ, or the genuineness of our conversion, if only we give ourselves wholly to the Lord, and 'watch and pray' lest we 'enter into temptation.' Such earnest, humble aspirations after Himself, awakened and sustained by His grace amid much fear and misgiving as to ourselves, the Lord is pleased graciously to

hear (ver. 24, in which, however, we must substitute, as in the original, the particle 'and' for 'therefore,' as in our authorized version). All this is, indeed, in accordance with the administration of the covenant of grace. Here the principles so fully explained by our Lord in His Sermon on the Mount, find their application (vers. 25-28). 'With the loving Thou manifestest Thyself loving; with the man who is wholly with Thee, Thou manifestest Thyself as wholly with him.' The word 'loving' refers to that aspect of piety which consists in heart-affection to the Lord, while the form of the verbs here used conveys the idea of *manifestation* on His part. Thus it is emphatically true, that 'whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.' Again, where the heart is wholly set upon Him, the Lord will graciously hold up our steps, and, if we may venture to use such terms, be sincere, faithful, and entirely with us. 'The secret of Jehovah is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant.' For what grace commenceth grace also perfecteth. 'Jehovah will give grace and glory.' 'Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.' The same truth is further unfolded in ver. 26, 'With him who purifieth himself Thou manifestest Thyself as pure, and with the froward' (literally, the tortuous, or tangled; the opposite of straight) 'Thou wilt manifest Thyself as froward' (the idea suggested by the word being that of *inaccessible*—meaning literally tied into a knot, or twisted up). In the one case we remember 1 John iii. 3: 'And

every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.' In the other we are reminded of the awful threatening that He 'will laugh at their calamity,' of the parable of the foolish virgins, and of the historical verification in Rom. i. 38. It needs no other condemnation than that the Lord should leave them to themselves, even as it needeth no other sanctification than that the Lord should manifest Himself as the Sanctifier. And the ultimate principle is that expressed by our Lord: 'Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.' 'For Thou wilt save' (or, savest) 'the afflicted people' (the poor and needy), 'and lofty eyes Thou wilt bring down' (or bringest down). The gospel to the poor—comfort to Lazarus; his consolation in this world to Dives. These two things are ever contrasted: spiritual poverty, need and afflictedness, and pride or lofty looks. And these two issues also are opposed: free salvation by His grace through the gospel to the one, and eternal abasement to the other. The latter is so frequently denounced (as in Isa. ii. 10, etc.) that we can regard the unconcern of 'the proud' as scarcely less than judicial blindness. Salvation is the gift of God; Christ is 'the consoler;' and grace is the bond which connects to us Him who 'shall wipe away all tears.' Thus it is 'not of works, but of grace,' that the poor and needy are saved, and so meeteth He our longing desires after Himself by giving Himself to us (vers. 26, 27).

Such views and experiences lead to the triumphant song of faith (vers. 28-45). Bursting through the narrow boundaries of the present, the inspired prophet beholds the application

of these precious facts of grace not only to himself and his descendants, but in connexion with Jesus Christ, the true 'Son of David.' Speaking in name of the Church of all ages, there is here a sweet commingling of that which in our exalted Head applies to *us* with what in its full meaning applies only to *Him*, and that just because it so applies to Him. The 'light' or lamp of Israel was not to be taken away from Jerusalem till the Sun of Righteousness should arise with healing in his wings (1 Kings xi. 36). Nor shall that light ever be quenched to the Church, or to us as members of it, even in the midst of 'darkness' (ver. 28). It is very precious to know that what applies to the Church as a whole also applies to us individually. For 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' 'Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ.' *In God* (as it should be rendered, ver. 29, 'In Thee') nothing is impossible, whether to our prayers or to our endeavours. Yet is such confidence and exultation so deeply rooted in God that we speedily turn from ourselves to Him (vers. 30, 31). These three things we joyously discover in God. As for His *work*: 'His way is perfect' (whole, complete, entire). We cannot doubt the future, time without end. Nor are we left even now in uncertainty. For 'the *word of Jehovah* is refined,' as gold purified from all admixture. Each word of His may be taken literally; turned into subject of prayer, and made object of expectation, which indeed is the best way of reading His Word. Again, the *grace of our God* is most sure and trustworthy. 'A shield is He to all that trust in Him.'

What protection this implies is best inferred from the general terms in which it is conveyed. According to our faith shall it be unto us. It is impossible to conceive any circumstances, temporal or spiritual, past, present, or future, to which this does not apply. There are seasons when we can so vividly realize it as almost to burst forth into the challenge of ver. 31. This not the less, but all the more, when all seems otherwise dark and dangerous. For our strongest are generally our outwardly weakest moments, and God's people have often more intense joy of confidence on the eve than on the evening of battle. Whenever we plainly see that it must be of His grace, and realize that He is our God, we 'stand still and see the salvation of our God.' These are some of the inward joys of the life of faith, with which 'a stranger intermeddled not.' Never stepped David more joyously forward than when he had doffed the armour of Saul and grasped his own sling and stones. Note also the ring of deep love (as in ver. 1), and of grateful affectionate cleaving to Him, which in every deliverance recognises Him as 'the God who girdeth me with strength, and' (literally) 'shall grant' (or give), 'perfect my way.' Such is He, such has He been, and such will He prove. This record for all ages is left to the Church of a faith much tried by men, and of a faithfulness much tried by grievous backslidings. With such promises, every undertaking becomes easy and truly successful (ver. 32, 33). And once more the song now passes back to its keynote (ver. 36); this time, louder, stronger, and more distinct than ever before in Old Testament times. 'And Thou wilt give me the shield of Thy salvation, and Thy right hand shall hold me up' (support,

strengthen me), 'and Thy condescension shall' (literally) 'make me many' (or great). Never before had David seen so clearly into his relation to the covenant of grace. For this spake he of Christ. What is more dimly apprehended in Ps. cxiii. 6, and given as sweet consolation to the Church in Isa. lvii. 15 and lxvi. 2, is here clearly expressed. His condescension to our low and lost estate—when He who was 'in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God,' 'made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross'—has made David and makes us great. This mystery of His condescension is infinitely precious to our souls. And having been allowed to 'see Jesus,' the Psalmist speaketh henceforth chiefly of Him; only viewing Him through his own medium, as formerly he had viewed himself through the medium of Christ. Verses 36 to 46 are the Davidic view of Christ, the application to Jesus of the history of David, the bright fulfilment of typical events, though still clothed in typical language.

The Psalm closes with a twofold doxology, vers. 46-48, and vers. 49, 50. The one is the expression of Israel's feelings, as more fully brought out in the threefold doxology before the advent of our Lord (Luke i.), and especially in the theocratic utterance of Zacharias the priest: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spoke by the mouth of His holy

prophets, which have been since the world began; *that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us*; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant.' The second doxology (vers. 49, 50) applies the redemption to the Gentiles, and is expressly referred to Jesus in Rom. xv. 9. It recalls to us the second part in the hymn of Zacharias (Luke i. 77-80). Thus with a Hallelujah to Jesus, and in believing anticipation of the extension of His kingdom far beyond the boundaries of nationality or of time, closes this review of Jehovah's dealings. It is as if we heard it in Old Testament strains: 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.'

1. Blessed be God, we know the grace of *our* Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. We know of His 'gentleness;' but has it made us 'great?' There is ever in us a tendency to attempt first getting up to Him, instead of receiving Him as He cometh down to us. Yet all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. And what infinite mercy is it that the Lord condescendeth *to us*! Behold, we are low and lost, vile and helpless before Thee. Lord, meet Thou us, for we cannot meet Thee. When emptied of all self, we feel that His grace is sufficient for us. We have in Him both justification and sanctification. 'Thou hast also given me the shield of Thy salvation; and Thy right

hand hath holden me up.' Thus, coming to Christ as we are—poor, needy, sin-laden—shall we indeed experience that 'the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'

2. 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.' My only concern must be that I work as *in Him*. Faith has what prayer seeks, for the promise is sure and steadfast. There is nothing within the compass of holy willing and doing which we are not allowed to bring before the Lord. Nay, all our anxieties and cares may we open up to Him who 'knoweth our frame.' The absolute confidence of a child appears in coming with all its wants to the Father, nor does this imply a murmuring spirit if the Father should not see fit to grant a request in *the particular form* in which it is uttered. If He gives not *this*, He will give something better. And when our trial is such that, humanly speaking, there seems no earthly remedy, He can make a way in the sea and a path in the deep. At any rate, we are not shut up to earthly remedies. Ours is a life of faith, which rests implicitly on His word, when we do not see, and in opposition to what we see. 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' A peculiar blessedness attacheth to such faith, irrespective of anything else, a nearness to God, and a resting on the bosom of Christ, like that of the beloved disciple. No undertaking seems too difficult, if only begun and carried on in God. What we want is more power, more prayer, more faith. 'Lord, increase our faith.'

3. What is the well-spring of my acting and hoping? Let me examine myself; let me review the past. In what re-

lationship do I stand to God and to the covenant of grace? 'With an upright man Thou wilt show Thyself upright; with the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure.' The great condition of success in any spiritual undertaking is to seek not our own, but His. If really we wish primarily to serve Him and to seek His glory, to sanctify ourselves and to advance His cause, if self is not in any shape our ultimate motive, then do we go forward boldly in His name. But, 'who can understand his errors? cleanse me from secret faults.' But even so, what depth of sympathy and compassion is there in Him towards our weakness and poverty! Who could have ground for desponding, or excuse for idleness, in view of such promises? And yet, Lord, oh for a closer walk with Thee!

CONQUERING kings their titles take
From the foes they captive make;
Jesus, by a nobler deed,
From the thousands He hath freed;
Yea, none other name is given
Unto mortals under heaven,
Which can make the dead arise,
And exalt them to the skies.

That which Christ so hardly wrought,
That which He so dearly bought,
That salvation,—mortals, say,
Will ye madly throw away?
Rather gladly for that Name
Bear the cross, endure the shame:
Joyfully for Him to die
Is not death, but victory.

Hymnologia Christiana.

XXVI.

GOD'S WORKS.

- 1 THE heavens declare the glory of God ; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work.
- 2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
- 3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.
- 4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.
In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,
- 5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.
- 6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it :
And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.
- 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul :
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.—PSALM XIX.

IT is one of the most common yet most grievous deceptions of the enemy, to lead us to separate the God of nature from the God of grace. Of the many who profess to view the one, how few realize the other ! And if the world is ignorant of the God of grace, may not the reproach be sometimes brought against believers that they fail, if not in realizing the God of nature, yet in feeling that the God of grace is also the God of nature ? This conviction, if properly entertained, would give us an entirely new, even a spiritual view

of nature. Ungodliness, or refusal to submit to Jehovah, lurks deep in our hearts, and there is perhaps the same leaven of atheism in the morbid asceticism which joys not in the gifts of the Lord, as in the gross impiety which shocks our religious feelings. But besides, it is, to say the least, a grievous want not to behold the beauty of the Lord in His works as well as in His Word. Our attention should not require to be specially called to them, nor should a mechanical assent to their declaring His glory suffice us. *They* should be quick to discern the hand of the Lord who have learned to hear His voice. Again, it is most needful to be properly instructed in this matter, not merely for *worship*, but for *comfort*. Believers enjoy their propriety in nature in measure as they feel that these are the works of their Father. For this fair dominion cannot remain subject to sin and to death. Lastly, believers gain a different view of the ordering and adapting of the laws of nature, of the government of the world, and consequently of the prevailing power of prayer, when they fully enter into this experience: 'All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Jehovah; and Thy saints shall bless Thee.'

Here is a morning song which most vividly sets before us the healthy spiritual state of a believer. Awakening from 'quiet rest, because Thou hast sustained me,' he openeth His eyes to all the wonders about him, and reads in the sky, sun, moon, and stars, the name and the glory of his God. But brighter far than all their glory, and louder far than all their praise, he sees and hears what the covenant of grace unfolds. This indeed is dearest to his heart. Not that he neglects

the one, but that it leads him onwards and upwards. 'All this and heaven besides,' said an eminent saint of our days, when one of the fairest prospects in our isles was opened to him. Nay, all this and a *present* heaven, and present fellowship with our Saviour. What were the heavens without the God of heaven, who is also our God and Father? And, as one has remarked, though the heavens declare the glory of God, they declare not His will, by the which we are justified and sanctified. All this is ours, and heaven is ours, and thus have we true gladness, because we have found Him of whom Moses and the Prophets spake. With such cheerful spirit look we abroad, because we have possessed ourselves of the pearl of great price.

Truly God 'has not left Himself without a witness.' 'Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.' There are silent sermons delivered all day and all night in every place. Alas, that men heed not the testimony! Engrossed with other matters, or forgetting the Creator in the creature, what might have proved precious instruction is lost to them. Yet only to *them*. For, when we look upward, 'the heavens declare' (relate, tell) 'the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth' (makes known, announces) 'His handy-work.' The sidereal heavens, with their untold worlds, relate His might and wisdom; the blue sky above us, with all its wonders, announces its Divine origin. Busy, many-tongued 'day pours forth

speech unto day,' and silent 'night showeth knowledge unto night.' The unfinished communication of one day pours, like the waters of an ever-flowing stream, into the next day, each taking up the broken tale, and each too short-lived to finish it. The unspoken instructions of one night are resumed by her sister, till silent nights shall burst into the bright and never-ending day of eternal Hallelujah. The story is ever the same. When I open mine eyes in the morning, it is upon the continuation of yesterday's story of wonders. When at night I lay me down, the silent watchers overhead bring with them the record of the mercies of last night. This sun has risen over Beth-el, and seen many a Beth-el since. This night with all her silent lessons has shown knowledge to Abraham, and taught the shepherds in Bethlehem's plains what it taught to him who had seen His day afar off. And the skill which ordered these heavens, and the hand which arched this sky, and the power which filled both these heavens and that sky, are those of 'our Father' which is 'in heaven.'

Surely, where He has placed mute testimonies will He also have living and speaking witnesses; and these proclamations which are being put up in all parts of His creation, are themselves evidence and pledge that He will take the government unto Himself. 'Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' It seems as if this Psalm, and Psalm xxxii., which in a sense completes its teaching, had been favourite hymns with Paul. And the reason of it is manifest. For the one was to him a constant spiritual commentary on nature, in his labours far away among the heathen, who,

silent themselves, had so grievously misunderstood and misapplied its teaching. Again, Ps. xxxii. would show him how easily free grace could accomplish what free grace had promised. And these two Psalms are, indeed, excellent missionary hymns. Far away from home and its privileges, has the missionary been long preceded by silent preachers, who speak to him as they do to those who understand not their teaching. 'It is not language; they are not words; nor is their voice heard' (for so, as it appears to us, ver. 3 should be rendered). Yet unspoken and unheard as is the testimony of heaven and sky, 'their measuring line has gone forth in all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.' One at least understood the language of these messengers. In his believing view, they have measured the boundary-line of earth as the King's possession; to his believing ear they have made proclamation of the King. Thus, as their record is daily and nightly repeated, have we a pledge, more precious than the rainbow was to Noah, that Jesus will take possession of His kingdom and reign. And so read we Rom. x. 18. Unheeding all the wickedness and vileness which is constantly enacted in their view, like the seraphim these heralds constantly proclaim God. And as from his chamber steps forth the bridegroom, so at early morn sheds the glorious sun his fresh and reviving light; as a hero in his strength he passeth over his course, nor is aught hid or withdrawn from his rays. The sun is in nature the fullest emblem of the Divine manifestation, as he is the source of our terrestrial wellbeing. His light, life, and heat, and the all-pervading, all-penetrating, reviving, and healing influences

of his beams, ever remind us of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings!

Thus far for the lessons of nature. And now abruptly—almost as if he had lingered too long in the court of the Gentiles—the holy worshipper turns to higher spiritual realities (ver. 7). These two things let us carefully avoid: not to perceive the voice of God in nature, or else to remain entranced by what after all is song without words. There is a true sense in which we are led up ‘from nature to nature’s God.’ But even here it is extremely dangerous to linger too long *without*. The heart of the believer longs to hear the voice of the Beloved. It is grace, our gifted interest in all, because in Him, which charms and holds us entranced. Oh what a God is our God, who has made the heavens the strings of His harp, and written His Name in the sky; the endless story of whose glory pours forth each day to its dying breath, and whose knowledge is nightly taught to a silent universe; whose sun, all-pervading in his gifts, is but the faint type of Him whose likeness of light he bears. But the cross and Calvary, grace and truth, are ever our main theme. We know more than the heavens preach, for His Son hath spoken to us in these last days. Yet is it well thus to connect nature with grace. For then each morning’s sun will also revive and warm our *hearts*, and carry us on his beams up to Him who is the light and life of the soul.

I. ‘Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.’ O my soul, dread the practical atheism of those who are ever quick to discern

second causes, but ever fail to recognise the *first* cause. All these are His creatures : they sprung into being by His creative word ; they must therefore have been intended for His glory ; and this their object will finally be accomplished. Even now they subserve most important spiritual purposes. They already declare His glory, and are employed in His work. God has very varied messengers. Not only do 'dragons and all deeps' praise Him, but 'fire and hail, snow and vapours, stormy wind *fulfilling His word.*' It is very precious and very comforting to think of these His creatures as 'fulfilling His word.' How readily can He call them forth 'from their chambers!' And how easily can He, who 'commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind which lifteth up the waves' of the sea, make 'the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.' Therefore let me not be afraid at any outward thing ; all these are God's servants. Even with reference to the devil, as one of the Fathers has it, 'his will only is evil, but his power is just ; for his will is of himself, but his power is of God.' Therefore what strong consolation and security have we, whose Father in Christ is that God, and who know that whatever messenger or servant He may employ, though it be the storm or the pestilence, famine, disease, or want, His purposes are those of infinite and eternal grace.

2. Again and again let us learn this lesson : 'All things must work together for good to them that love Him.' Our Christianity must not wither when temptations arise, nor be choked by the possessions and enjoyments of this world. In the enjoyment of the creature let us learn how passing its

beauty is, and how glorious and gracious the Creator. If creature-good be withdrawn, let it only lead us the more closely to Him who fainteth not, neither is weary. It is a morbid asceticism which shutteth itself up from the world. Sanctification is not negative, but positive. It is not a negation of the world, but an affirmation of God in it. Our religion lies not in withdrawal from the world, but in leavening it with the gospel. Yet how exceedingly difficult is it to be rightly affected in this matter. Lord, I ever err by excess. I have laid too much value on the things of sense and of time, and have forgotten the Giver in the gift, nay, I have been carried far beyond Thee, and chosen mine own ways. Thy gifts, instead of leading me to Thee, have led me from Thee. I have not read Thy name in nature, nor viewed Thy propriety in the creature. Pardon, Lord, and teach me to know wisdom. Or else we have strayed into the opposite extreme, and even if we attached not merit to it, we imagined that we had overcome sin by retiring so far as we could from contact with His creatures. Yet should all these be made subservient to Thy glory. So help me to live as to live for Thee. Then only make I right use of the creature when it bears constant reference to Thee.

3. 'Their line is gone forth through all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.' Wherever we may go to preach His name, He has had a preacher before us. We need not despond in our work. His sun, His moon, and His stars must shine upon *His* earth. 'Now we see not yet all things put in subjection under Him.' What, ever after that glorious promise (Gen. xv. 5), the stars must have been to

Abraham, that and much more are His works to us. And yet they preach unspoken sermons! How much greater privileges have been vouchsafed unto us! We clearly know what they dimly indicate. This God is our Father in Christ Jesus who loved us. And shall we be mute alone of all His works, we to whom most mercy has been shown? Mark this, my soul. All His works reflect His glory. Fear not the creature, worship the Creator. Love not the creature with absolute love; 'love the Lord, all His saints.' Serve the Lord in and with all these things, and show forth the praises of Him who hath given thee propriety in them by giving thee propriety in Himself. This day let me make believing acknowledgment of God in the world, and believing use of the world for God.

THERE nor waxing moon nor waning,

Sun nor stars in courses bright :

For the LAMB to that glad city

Shines an everlasting light ;

There the daylight beams for ever—

All unknown are time and night.

For the saints, in beauty beaming,

Shine in light and glory pure ;

Crown'd in triumph's flushing honours,

Joy in unison secure,

And in safety, till their battles

And their foes' discomfiture.

Christ, Thy soldier's palm of honour,

Unto this Thy city free

Lead me, when my warfare's girdle

I shall cast away from me :

A partaker in Thy bounty,

With Thy blessed ones to be.

S. PETER DAMIANO.

(*Wackerbarth.*)

XXVII.

GOD'S WORD.

- 7 THE law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul :
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple :
- 8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart :
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes :
- 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever :
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold ;
Sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb.
- 11 Moreover, by them is thy servant warned : and in keeping of them there is
great reward.
- 12 Who can understand his errors ? cleanse thou me from secret faults.
- 13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins ; let them not have
dominion over me :
Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.
- 14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart,
Be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

PSALM XIX.

‘GREAT and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name ? for Thou only art holy : for all nations shall come and worship before Thee ; for thy judgments are made manifest.’ Such is the song of Moses and of the Lamb, in which the saints on earth also join, according to their limited knowledge and weak faith. To combine our believing view of

creation with that of providence, and both with devout understanding of the covenant of grace, is indeed characteristic of God's people. The world in which we live is, in that sense, not a strange place to us. It is our Father's work, from which, indeed, He has not withdrawn Himself. 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being.' In this world of ours are His 'ways,' 'just and true,' and from its re-opened lips shall ascend the voice of praise and of prayer to the Triune Jehovah. It is under the influence of such views and feelings that we ever love best to read in the opened book of God's works. Yet are we not left merely to such teaching. God has *spoken* to us, and in these last days 'by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things.' And thus do we learn really to understand nature when we have learned to understand His word. If His works call forth our adoring wonder, language scarcely sufficeth to express our value of His precious and life-giving Word. The one showed us the Creator, the other reveals to us our Father. By faith we realize this, and rejoice in God, the glorious Creator and gracious Redeemer.

Yet while God's works and His Word are the two parts of His revelation, which, so far from contradicting, illustrate each other, it is well to remember that the one speaks no language, while the other clearly reveals unto us the way unto the Father. Accordingly, the transition in the use of the designations given to the Lord in the two parts of this Psalm is most marked. In reference to His works He is ever spoken of as *God*, or the *Most High*; in His covenant of grace (as in this second part of our Psalm) He appears as Jehovah. We

have ascended the steps of the Temple ; we have entered with real joy into His courts. What we have seen and felt of and in nature has gladdened our hearts, and now pours forth *our* song of praise. Heaven and earth declare His glory and handywork. We also declare His glory and are His handywork. They declare the glory of His power, we of His grace ; they are the silent, we the living monuments of His mercy.

In the twelve beatitudes attached to the law (vers. 7-9), which Luther compares to the twelve manner of fruit on the tree of life, we read the high estimate which the believing soul, or rather the Holy Ghost, attaches to the revelation of our Father's will. These beatitudes are entirely different from all legalism, and represent the feelings of one who has learned to rejoice in the law of God after the inward man. They refer not to our justification by the deeds of the law, but to our sanctification by looking into ' that perfect law of liberty,' and our deep joy in fellowship with God. Nor should it be forgotten that at that time the law was perhaps the only portion of God's written will which existed in its present form. ' All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' There is, as our divines have it (Calvin, *Inst.* ii. 7, 9-13), a three-fold use of the law : as schoolmaster to Christ, to hedge up sinners and prevent them from gross iniquity ; and, what is designated as its principal and primary object, to teach believers more fully, day by day, what is the will of their Father ; and to

admonish them to walk therein. If it were needful to give proof of the holy disposition of God's people, it would appear most clearly in their views of the Divine law. They are not, and wish not, to be freed from its obligations, but from its curse; not from its yoke, but from its bondage. None the less, but all the more, do we delight in it, that we are not under it as a covenant, but as a rule of life. The 'thou shalt' has through grace become 'I will'—not unmingled with humble confession and earnest prayer. When most legal we were greatest law-breakers; when most free from the law we are its closest observers. It is '*perfect*,' and therefore 'converting' (or rather quickening, refreshing) 'the soul.' The whole will of God is perfectly brought out, and, shining upon us, refreshes the weary soul, by showing 'what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.' It is a law to which the words of St. Augustine apply: 'Give what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt.' Viewed from another point, it is not merely law (which properly means instruction or doctrine), but also 'testimonies,' referring to its hortatory and directing character. As such it 'is sure,' stable and reliable, and hence 'making wise the simple'—a designation given to believers, as denoting their natural weakness, like that of children. In this respect also, He will bring 'the blind by a way they knew not.' Unable 'to direct' our steps, we have in His word a sure guide, and if with simplicity we surrender ourselves to its teachings we are safe. There is a peculiar significance even in the derivation of the word 'simple,' which properly means open or susceptible. 'Be ye not, therefore, as the horse or as the mule, whose

mouth requireth to be kept with bit and bridle, lest he come near unto thee.' Yet how often and grievously have we misunderstood the import of the law, while we were under its dominion ! Then spake it only of us, now speaks it only of Him ; then spake it with the thunders of Sinai, now speaks it in the accents of Him whose 'yoke is easy' and whose 'burden is light;' then spake it the demands of an unknown God, now speaks it as the kingly will of our heavenly Father; then was it our curse and fear, now is it our liberty and joy. This change has grace wrought by transporting us, as it were, to the other, the bright side of the cloud, and making us His children through faith in Christ Jesus. All has now become changed. 'The statutes' (or demands) 'of Jehovah are right' (or straight). Hence, so far from burdening or terrifying, they 'rejoice the heart.' It is no hard commandment that all-comprehensive demand: 'My son, give me thine heart.' Greater joy we have not, and know not, than to see and to be led in the way of the Lord. 'The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes.' Its entrance gives light, and sheds light upon men and matters. Corresponding to this its twofold character are the results. 'The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring for ever.' So far from these feelings passing away, they are purified and tried ; hence they endure for ever. And again, 'The judgments of Jehovah' (or His decisions) 'are true and righteous altogether.'

Such being the character of God's Word, we can understand the feelings of God's people in reference to it. Its objective preciousness and its subjective joyousness are pre-

sented under the strongest figures (ver. 10). The choice which the world so often makes is not only reversed, but with the emphasis of Paul's experience: 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.' It is not only that we cast in our lot there, but that we highly esteem and delight in this as our best treasure. We would not have it otherwise. What we want is not less of His light, but more of His love; for, as Calvin remarks, the expressions apply not to the naked commandment, nor to it as separated from the hope of forgiveness and the presence of His Holy Spirit. And this is what Luther calls the great wonder, that now that pleases supremely, which formerly displeased above all. Truly, we are here on evangelical ground. It is the 'servant' of the Lord who not only exalts this law, but pleads about it before His throne of grace. 'Also by them is Thy servant enlightened; in keeping of them is great reward' (the latter word very significantly means the end, the sequence, and is closely related to the word 'heel'). Present enlightenment, though only to His servants, and eternal reward, that is, reward lasting into eternity, are the two blessings connected with this spiritual apprehension of the law. It is a great mistake to banish the idea of 'reward'—in the New Testament sense, not as of merit, but as of promise—from our view. He which soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. There are various degrees of glory, corresponding to the varied measure of grace. And this affords a constant *stimulus* to renewed service. 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

But just in measure as we delight in the law of God after the inward man, do we find another law in our members warring against the law of the Spirit. This makes not the law of God less precious, but ourselves more intent on pardon and sanctification. Hence the burden of the closing confession and prayer. Alas, despite all that I know and feel, 'Who can understand—observe and know—his errors?' More than the hairs on our head are they; all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Very significantly these errors are marked by a word which designates sins of weakness or of ignorance, in opposition to known and voluntary sins. The old man is still alive, and we are full of all evil. Such sins generally pass by us unobserved, save so far as concerns their spring and effects in heart-alienation from God. Yet these sins we also confess with deep humiliation. As an old German divine expresses it, Mentally fall down before Him and acknowledge thy guilt and misery, asking for pardon and grace, and also forming in all sincerity holy resolutions, 'and then torment thyself no further.' Accordingly, we follow up this confession by the prayer: 'From hidden sins absolve Thou me,' the word being equivalent to *justification*, in what divines call the *forensic* sense, implying the judicial declaration of 'not guilty.' For, our guilt has been laid upon our Surety. This petition is appropriately followed by one for sanctification (ver. 13). We ask to be pardoned our hidden sins, and to be preserved from 'presumptuous sins,'—from high-handed, conscious, intentional and known transgression. Such sins, indulged in or tampered with, become *besetting* sins which 'have dominion' over us. Therefore 'let

us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.' And with reference to both classes of sin, and to our twofold need of justification and sanctification, 'let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' 'Then shall I be unpunishable' (not guilty), 'and justified' (declared absolved) 'from the great transgression.' And with an humble prayer for acceptance of this spiritual sacrifice of lips and hearts (the terms being sacrificial) closes this truly evangelical Psalm.

1. 'O Jehovah, my Rock and my Redeemer;' what fulness of hope and experience are embodied in these words! This indeed is prayer which closes in accents of such confidence. It is New Testament language in Old Testament times. And why should we, to whom fuller light has been granted, be unwilling or unable to rise to this height of believing conviction? That He is a Rock and a Redeemer, is His revelation in grace; that He is *my* Rock and *my* Redeemer, is my application in faith. For faith dares to write the personal pronoun into God's promises, and it does so on the warrant of God's invitation. Hence the joyous characters of true faith. To Thee do I flee; Thou hast purchased me with Thy precious blood. Is there anything less that in deepest humility I could say of myself, or anything more that in highest praise I could say of Him? And thus meet these two in Christ: justice, which has condemned me, and mercy, which has absolved me. Grace can descend no further, and ascend no higher; all is in Christ, and all is for me.

2. Confession and prayer, not morbid self-seeking nor self-righteous effort, for all is from Thee and in Thee. 'Beloved, if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.' 'Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults.' Yet this refers to the constantly renewed pardon granted to His people. With reference to our justification, and the pardon of our sins generally, we have Ps. xxxii. and li. Yea, and 'the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all* sin.' But justification and sanctification are closely united in our experience and in our prayers (see Rom. viii.) ; and both spring from our union to Christ. Much of our unrest arises from those numberless and continuous failings which are due to our ignorance, our weakness, and our forgetfulness. But 'he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.' Another cause of our anxiety is our inability to cope even with high-handed, especially with besetting sin. Here we pray and believe, 'Keep back Thy servant ;' 'Lead us not into temptation.' 'He will with the temptation also make a way to escape.' Therefore, we rejoice *in the Lord*, and rejoice alway. Let us seek to realize our privileges. Lord, have mercy upon me ; Lord, heal me ; Lord, save me ; I flee to Thee !

3. God's works and God's Word : both perfect, both showing forth the praises of Him who brought us out of darkness into His *marvellous* light. The one the unspoken, the other the spoken revelation of Him who is our Father in Christ. We know little of heaven, save what is associated with God. But this sufficeth us. There must be abundant employment

and constant enjoyment there. And if such is the brightness of what we now see dimly, what must it be in the full light of His countenance? Meanwhile, let us neither be inattentive nor undevout observers; let us learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart, and connecting what we see of His works with what we know of His Word, let us go on in the name of God the Lord, from strength to strength, till we all appear in Zion before God. Why stand ye idle all the day? Is there nothing to admire, nothing for which to plead, nothing to do for Him? And still among the lilies of Thy promises will we feed, until the day break and the shadows flee away.

LORD, Thy Word abideth,
And our footsteps guideth;
Who its truth believeth
Light and joy receiveth.
When our foes are near us,
Then Thy Word doth cheer us:
Voice of consolation,
Message of salvation.

Word of Mercy, giving
Succour to the living;
Word of life, supplying
Comfort to the dying!
O that we, discerning
Its most holy learning,
Lord, may love and fear Thee,
Evermore be near Thee! Amen.

Hymnologia Christiana.

XXVIII.

STRONG CRYING.

- 1 THE LORD hear thee in the day of trouble ; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.
- 2 Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion.
- 3 Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice. Selah.

PSALM XX.

THIS is a Psalm of very joyous confidence, such as well befits the experience of Ps. xix. For 'this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us ; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.' So strongly is this confidence here expressed that prayer seems almost swallowed up in praise. Indeed, as Luther remarks, it is a shout of triumph before the victory, and a cry of joy before the help. Another peculiarity, closely connected with the former, is the *exclusive* character of such faith. It is not shutting our eyes, as it were, to the things that are seen, but deliberately looking at them, and then away from them to much higher realities. A faith like this implies a deep sense of Christ's presence and sufficiency. For the sufficiency of a present Christ is

ever the ground of our joy. He fills all, so that nothing is left empty ; no want unsupplied ; no fear unallayed ; no request unanswered ; no desire unmet. And in such joy we know not whether most to exult or most to tremble, for it is holy joy, wrought in us by the Spirit of God. Hence it is ever best and most appropriate that our joy should assume the form of prayer, and pour itself forth in fellowship with God, and in petitions for things agreeable to His will.

In its fullest sense the Psalm applies to Christ the King, and to the establishment of His kingdom. Whatever the primary or immediate occasion of its composition may have been, it reached far beyond David, and is a prayer of the Church, in which every individual believer may find his title to an expected answer. In the victory of our exalted Head over all His enemies our victory is included. Full of sweet comfort to every afflicted child of God, it is also very precious as being capable of application to our distressed brethren. And the *optative* form in which the verbs are couched in our authorized version, is in the original expressed by the *future tense*. This is most significant to the eye of faith, for 'we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.' 'Jehovah hear thee' (or, *will* hear thee) 'in the day of trouble' (literally, sorrow, anguish, pressure); 'the name of the God of Jacob set thee on high' (or, *will* set thee on high, and so forth in the four opening verses). There are *days* of pressure and anguish, of loneliness and desertion. Nor can any stranger bring his own standard to bear upon what I feel as *my* anguish. We have even more propriety in our sorrows than in our joys. In such circumstances, what is

left to us? Surely not the help of man. Even where that is possible it is not sufficient. Like him of old, we must learn to spread our case before God. And He hears us in the day of trouble; not before it, but during its course. There is no ground for presumption and none for despondency; no provision made beforehand, nor does it arrive too late. The trial is needful, and perhaps the help is not what we had wished, for the 'wounds' may be as necessary as the trial of our faith, but He 'bindeth' them up. This seasonableness of help is peculiarly characteristic of our sympathizing High Priest, and alike exercises and consoles our faith. We must learn to trust Him *till* the day of trial. Most assuredly our Surety will not fail. The recollection of 'the name of the God of Jacob' is associated with Gen. xxxv. 3: 'Let us arise and go up to Beth-el; and I will there make an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.' Nor let us forget the previous preparation of putting away the strange gods, the becoming clean, and changing our garments (Gen. xxxv. 2). And our covenant-God will set us up on high where enemies cannot come near us,—in a place of strength and of glory. Enemies may not be removed, but we may be lifted above them.

The more faith is exercised, the stronger it waxes. 'He will send thy help from the sanctuary, and from Zion thy support.' We leave all in His hands, and look for the accomplishment of His promises. Both help and support are provided—holy help and covenant support. To speak reverently, if the Lord allies Himself with us, we must expect

that while He hears us, He will take vengeance on our inventions. And our support is in accordance with the provisions and terms of the covenant of grace. Which of God's people, on looking back upon his past history, cannot put his seal to this; and shall we not trust for the future 'the name' and memorial of 'the God of Jacob?'

'Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and will break
In blessings on your head!'

This twofold state of heart should we ever seek to cultivate: deep love to Jesus as *our* Saviour, and joyous boldness of expectant faith. He is not, and cannot be, unmindful of those for whom He shed His precious blood; nay, in His condescension He assures us that He is 'not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward His name.' Cornelius was told in vision (Acts x. 4), 'Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a *memorial* before God.' 'He will remember all thy meat-offerings, and thy whole burnt-sacrifices will He make fat' (perhaps, He will consume to ashes,—viz., by sending down the fire from above). These two sacrifices symbolized the offering of appropriate service of heart, life, and thanks unto God, and our entire self-surrender unto Him. The two are combined; and however different the form in which they may now be offered, they are the same in spirit and in truth as in Old Testament times. Yet in our offerings also is the principal part of Him. He remembers our new obedience, and He makes fat (or acceptable) our entire self-surrender to Him.

And this is the eternal truth in the Old Testament symbol, that as the meat-offering was brought unto Him, so our new obedience also must be directly offered unto Him. The alms we give, the labours in which we engage, the comforts which we dispense, we would lay directly upon His altar. We serve the Lord Jesus in serving His people, or promoting His cause, and therefore the channel and opportunity are comparatively indifferent. Thus all are *as He appointeth*. So with reference to our whole burnt-sacrifice, or entire self-surrender to Him, He must 'make it fat.' Gregory the Great speaks of works of faith, watered by our tears of lowest penitence and humblest confession, such as the anointing of the feet of Jesus by her who washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, as 'fat burnt-sacrifices.' And truly the alabaster-box, which contained the myrrh of Jesus' name, had been first broken in her heart, ere the alabaster-box, the gift of her love, was broken at Simon's table. There is nothing too precious for a meat-offering to the Lord our Saviour. We give Him that is dearest to us, though perhaps we give it weeping. Nor checks He our tears who knoweth our hearts. Yet withal He bids us 'depart in peace.' It is this aloneness with Jesus in the crowded banqueting-hall of Simon, this breaking through all restraints, this heedlessness of all others and of every other consideration, this entireness of our self-surrender, which characterizes the spiritual burnt-sacrifice. *He makes it fat*, and, we would add, irrespective of the question whether such is the primary meaning of the expression, 'He turns it to ashes by sending His fire from heaven.'

1. It sometimes seems to us, in times of trouble, as if we had scarcely ever known before the value of prayer. So fresh, so great, and so comforting is the privilege felt, that we wonder how we so rarely went to, and so little remained at a throne of grace. At such seasons the mind sweetly acquiesces in God's promises, and *feels* them to be true long before it has *experienced* them to be true. And some of us, from the waywardness of our hearts, need more and louder calls than others. Thus do we learn to 'glory in tribulations also.' We wonder how the men of the world *can* be supported in their sorrows, and we wonder what can be wanting to those who sit in sweet stillness at the feet of Jesus. Consider, O my soul, that thou mayest ask all things! Nothing is withheld from thee *that He can give with Himself*. The limits of the covenant of grace are the only limits of thy asking, and of His giving. Consider with what love Jesus has loved thee, when He gave Himself for thee, and dwell upon this fact. No 'trouble' can be beyond the reach of *His* grace who has delivered thee from death. With every temptation He maketh a way to escape. The chief part of my 'trouble' springeth from *within*, not from *without*. It is mine unbelief, not His unwillingness, that stands in the way of inward rest and outward safety. There are indeed *days* of trouble to each of us, when the sky seems *all* overcast. Yet if we can say nothing else, we know that 'heaven will bring us sweeter rest.' 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' Only let us not doubt Him, but cry all the more earnestly, and hold fast by Jesus. Lord, burdened as I am, Thou wast burdened for me, and tookest

away my *heavy* burden. Surely this is *Thine* hand, my Father. I will humble myself, I will confess my sin, I will seek after Thee. 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.' 'Abide with us' on that sad and lonely evening, O Thou who hast opened to us the Scriptures, and shown us Thine own glory!

2. Defence, help, and strength: this threefold blessing do I need. Many are mine enemies, defend Thou; utterly powerless I am, help Thou; weak, give Thou strength. And here let me look back over the long record of His dealings with such as I am; nay, let me think of my own past history. Prayer begins at nothing and ends with everything. The very idea of prayer implies my utter poverty and His infinite riches. How often have I experienced all this from the day in which He called me out of darkness into His marvellous light, to this hour, when again I stand a needy suppliant at His throne of grace! 'A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.' Though I have sinned and failed, and deserved nothing but Thy wrath and righteous indignation, yet, Lord, help and pardon me. And if my guilt cannot shut me out from Thee, surely nothing else can. Yet will I confess my sin, and greatly humble myself. Now, Lord, for Jesus' sake, seal upon my heart a sense of forgiveness and of Thy love. Show us Thyself and it sufficeth. There is not any sorrow nor want which can alienate us from Jesus, or for which His presence is not sufficient.

3. But let me be earnestly jealous about my 'burnt-sacrifice,' and my 'meat-offering.' We must have a spiritual history, beginning (so far as we are concerned) with self-

surrender to the Lord, and unfolding itself in conscious devotedness to Him. It must be our first object to be certain of this. And if we have never before sought Him, why not this day, and at this moment? *Immediateness* is one of the great characteristics of the gospel offer. He offers pardon *at present*, which for every one of us is sufficient *at present*. The present moment alone is ours. 'Agree with thine adversary *quickly*, whiles thou art in the way with him.' Now would we come through Christ Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Hear us, Lord, and save us, to the glory of Thy grace.

ARE thy toils and woes increasing?

Are the foe's attacks unceasing?

Look with faith unclouded,

Gaze with eyes unshrouded,

On the Cross!

Dost thou fear that strictest trial?

Tremblest thou at Christ's denial?

Never rest without it,

Clasp thine arms about it,—

That dear Cross!

Say then,—' Master, while I cherish

That sweet hope, I cannot perish!

After this life's story

Give Thou me the glory

For the Cross!'

S. METHODIUS.

(*Hymns of the Eastern Church.*)

XXIX.

THE EXCLUSIVENESS OF FAITH.

- 4 GRANT thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.
5 We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up
our banners :
The Lord fulfil all thy petitions.
6 Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed :
He will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right
hand.
7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses ;
But we will remember the name of the Lord our God.
8 They are brought down and fallen ; but we are risen, and stand upright.
9 Save, Lord : let the King hear us when we call.—PSALM XX.

WHEN our souls have been unburdened by rolling our burdens upon Him, a precious sense, not only of relief, but of calm expectancy, follows. Nothing is too great for Him to give, and we only await His manifestation. Meantime, we make known our requests, and look up to the Lord. The oil is not stayed, only 'there is not a vessel more' to receive it. And so we can not only pay our 'debt,' but 'live off the rest.' It is a very bold petition which follows in ver. 4, and which, perhaps, we might feel inclined rather to urge for others than for ourselves, or if for ourselves, seek to keep in its *general* terms rather than descend to particulars. If our hearts have

been offered as whole burnt-sacrifices, and our lives as meat-offerings, but only so, may we both ask and anticipate : ' He will give thee according to thine heart, and fulfil all thy counsels.' It is wonderful how our hearts and minds are set at rest when we are sure that we are His, and primarily and mainly seek, even in outward things, to serve Him. Then also can we offer special petitions even for outward things, and look for a *full* answer (' *all* thy counsels') when we connect them with His glory. It were impious to ask for the means of selfish gratification ; *there is no limit* to our asking and expecting means for serving God in the particular way in which He directs us. And so as to all outward things, and our prayers in connexion with them. But it is of the deepest importance to remember, step by step, that the burnt-sacrifice must ever precede such expectations. If I were to cease asking for all outward things needed and desirable for His service and glory, even though men think me an enthusiast in cherishing such expectations, I might as well cease praying altogether. If I asked for them without the preceding and accompanying burnt-sacrifice, I would turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. Again, let us here remember that God has *imposed no other limits to our prayers than Himself*, i.e., His character, glory, and purposes. Within these bounds all may be asked, and the more the better. *A poor asker is generally a poor giver.* According to our faith is it unto us, in every sense. Not to open our mouth wide must be the consequence either of our ignorance, of our unbelief, or of our self-seeking. And he who does not open his mouth wide is not likely to sing well, nor to have much

to sing about. So far, then, from being straitened in Him, let us see to it that we be not straitened in ourselves. The Church would have much more power, and her achievements would be far other, had we learned to ask aright, and to ask enough. There would be neither want of means, nor of men, nor of success, if we only sought it in the right quarter, and, while so asking, had the *whole of self* consumed as a whole burnt-sacrifice. And after all what we so ask is not only asked in the name of the Lord Jesus, but *for* the Lord Jesus, for His kingdom and glory, just as we have seen that this Psalm in reality applies to Him and to His kingdom. Lastly, even though the answer to our petitions may not always *seem* literal—which within the above-mentioned limits will, however, surely be granted—He will give according to our *hearts*, if not according to our words, and fulfil our *counsels*, if not our undertakings.

There are, alas, far too few who will not only do, but dare, for Christ. A spirit of cowardice, the offspring of a want of realizing faith, has taken possession of us. Even the wise virgins slumber and sleep. We are smitten with the fear of failure and the fear of man, because we draw our inspirations and our succour from men. We certainly believe not in supernatural agency as the world believes in natural agency. The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. We believe as if we believed not. Yet how encouraging to the faith of God's people is the knowledge of such answers to prayer. 'We will jubilee in Thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will unfurl' (or raise) 'our banners ; Jehovah fulfil' (or will fulfil) 'all thy

petitions.' We can almost imagine that we hear the song of 'joy in heaven' over a returning sinner. Most deep and heartfelt is the sympathy and close the bond which connects the children of God. A soul saved calls for jubilee, not only as adding another to our Redeemer's many crowns, and bringing glory to God, but for the ineffable deliverance wrought. Again, so far as the Church on earth is concerned, prayer so heard will lead us to display our banners in the name of our God. You may say that this is warfare after victory; and so in a certain sense it is. Yet is our warfare never really ended, till at even we lay ourselves to rest. The Church is compared to an 'army with banners' (Song vi. 10), and their unfurling and display is in His name.

Such answers to prayer also greatly raise our confidence in Him through whom we offer them, and for whose sake they are granted. 'Now know I that Jehovah has heard His Anointed, He will answer Him from the heavens of His holiness; with the strength of the salvation of His right hand.' Faith becomes assurance when it looks to Christ as Him whom God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour. Then there are no longer *futures*, but in Christ all *has been* accomplished. And such answers are from 'His holy heavens,' in covenant faithfulness to His promises. Most marked is now the intense exclusiveness of faith. It is not only with reference to our enemies, but looking around on the ordinary confidence of the men of the world, that we take up our position: 'These chariots and those horses, but we will call to remembrance (remember with praise and confidence) the

name of Jehovah our God.' A noble contrast this. Here is the arm of flesh, the might and resources of this world. But of all the ways open to us we deliberately choose that of human weakness, yet Divine strength. The help which we seek is not derived from earthly weapons; ours is exclusively a spiritual confidence. We despise not means, but we trust not in means. 'All things are lawful unto me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.' It is not a calculation of forces; probabilities have no place here. There is One 'who is able to save or to destroy.' Moreover, the soul maketh deliberate and joyous choice of God. If we saw all the world arrayed against us, it would not lower, and if we saw all the world upon our side, it would not increase our confidence. Said Chrysostom: 'If the empress order me to be sawed asunder, let her so do; the same was done to Isaiah the prophet. If she have me cast into the sea, I think of Jonah. If she have me thrown into the fiery furnace, then I suffer with the three men of God. If she expose me to the wild beasts, I will remember Daniel in the lions' den. If she order me to be beheaded, I have John for my companion. If she will have me to be stoned, let her do so; such has been the end of Stephen.' But there is more than even this readiness of endurance. 'I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.' And it marks the intensest feeling of the heart thus to cling to the Lord, deliberately, of set purpose, and *exclusively*. 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' And most assuredly such faith has the victory. 'We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.' What should we fear? With much earnest pleading and

wrestling we bring before Him His gracious covenant promises and our need; yea, and though we should have to confess a thousand backslidings and sins, He is faithful, and cannot deny Himself. And with much calm joy we rest upon Him. We remember His Name, and trust in Him; and the result of such trust is just the reverse of the world's expectations. 'They are brought down and fallen, but we rise up and stand upright;' and oh, with what a different front! 'I, even I, am He that comforteth you. Who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass, and forgettest Jehovah thy Saviour, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?'

Most appropriately closes the Psalm with a 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' and in the language of continuous prayer. 'Hear Thou us,' comments Luther, 'who art truly our King. For David, who is Thy servant, is not our king, nor rules he his but Thy kingdom. With such affection does he strongly move God—*i.e.*, teach us to move God—as He who is moved when we are moved. For how should He not hear, when His kingdom, His cause, and His honour are in danger? That is, then pray we most fervently when we have the confidence that we are God's kingdom and His portion. For then seek we not what is ours, and are sure that He will not forsake a cause which belongeth to Him, nor a kingdom which is His, especially when we look unto Him for it.'

1. The most intense assurance and joy is that which springs from the exclusiveness of faith, which the world would consider as its element of weakness. Only 300 must march in Gideon's army, and even these shall conquer, not with sword, but with trumpet and torch. Real help is never wrought till we renounce all hope in self or man. This applies both to spiritual and to outward deliverance. Moses must go for forty years into the wilderness before he can lead forth Israel out of Egypt. A man must become small in order to become great; we must strike downwards before we can grow upwards. And this is one of the uses of the straits into which the Lord brings His people. Another is that the glory should be altogether His. But the process is exceedingly painful; in fact, a crucifying of the flesh. Yet when we have reached this height, and can realize to any extent the full meaning of 'Jehovah reigneth,' what a Pisgah-view of the land of promise opens to us! Who can resist us, or what real obstacles are there, if God be with us? Let us seek to be assured of this, in the twofold sense of our cause being His cause, or rather His cause ours, and of having cast ourselves exclusively and most believingly upon Him. For even His cause may not prosper in our hands, and the very ark of Jehovah, so far from securing the victory, may be carried for a time, yet not a captive but a conqueror, into the land of the Philistines.

2. O for a heart right with God, for counsels drawn from His counsel! O for entire devotedness and constant devotion to Him—a whole burnt-sacrifice and a meat-offering! What hinders it? The deepest longing of our souls is after Thee, the living God. Our only help and our only

confidence is in Thee. Nor seek we Thee merely for help ; we seek Thee for joy. But we cannot have that joy in Thee without having first, and having all along, that help from Thee. Our souls must be washed from their guilt, and our hearts sanctified by Thy Holy Spirit. Then, day by day, Thine help cometh in the ordinary dispensation of the covenant of grace, whereby 'all things must work together for good to them that love Him, that are the called according to His purpose.' It needs not special miracles where there is a constant miracle. Thyself art to us surety for good ; all good Thyself, and all pledge of good. Teach us then to know more of Thee, *whom to know is life eternal*. Draw us closer to Thyself, and ever by Thine all-conquering love keep us by Thyself. When we are conquered by Thee, all our enemies are conquered ; when we rise up and stand upright, are they brought down and fall.

3. There is joy in heaven and in the presence of the holy angels over one sinner that repenteth. The victories of God's people are our victories. What affects one member affecteth all the members. And very sweet are our prayers for others. Sometimes, when we can scarcely pray for ourselves, we learn to do so by first praying for others. Nor is there aught more encouraging than the record of God's answers to prayers. The stone at Beth-el was anointed ; it became both a memorial-stone and an altar. Every answered prayer is a seal of God's faithfulness. It is, in reality, our High Priest who pleadeth, and every answer is an answer to Him. O what enlargement in prayer does not this afford ; and what quickening in work for the Lord, how-

ever impossible to man it may appear, does such enlargement in prayer give ! Lord, so help us to pray that we shall work, and so help us to work that we shall pray, and so help us to see that we shall believe, and so to believe that we shall see ; and all the glory shall be Thine, through Christ Jesus our exalted King !

THE Royal Banners forward go,
The Cross shines forth in mystic glow ;
Where He in flesh, our flesh Who made,
Our sentence bore, our ransom paid.

Fulfill'd is all that David told
In true prophetic song of old ;
Amidst the nations God, saith he,
Hath reign'd and triumph'd from the Tree.

O Tree of Beauty ! Tree of Light !
O Tree with royal purple dight !
Elect, on whose triumphal breast
Those holy limbs should find their rest !

On whose dear arms, so widely flung,
The weight of this world's ransom hung ;
The price of human-kind to pay,
And spoil the spoiler of his prey.

FORTUNATUS.

(*Mediæval Hymns and Sequences.*)

XXX.

THE SONG OF HOPE.

- 1 THE King shall joy in thy strength, O Lord ;
And in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice !
- 2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire,
And hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah.
- 3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness :
Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.
- 4 He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever
and ever.
- 5 His glory is great in thy salvation : honour and majesty hast thou laid upon
him.
- 6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever :
Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.
- 7 For the King trusteth in the Lord,
And through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved.
- 8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies ;
Thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.
- 9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger :
The Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour
them.
- 10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth,
And their seed from among the children of men.
- 11 For they intended evil against thee :
They imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.
- 12 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back,
When thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the
face of them.
- 13 Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength : so will we sing and praise
thy power.—PSALM XXXI.

THE nearer we approach the view of Calvary (Ps. xxii.), the more distinctively Messianic do the prophetic utterances of the Psalms become. There is less of the type and more of the Antitype, till David seems lost in 'the Son of David.' Our Psalm is an application of the promise originally given 'for a great while to come : ' 'Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee ; thy throne shall be established for ever.' This was alike the glory of David and of Israel, and 'the desire of all nations.' Indeed, so distinct is the reference here to '*the* King,' that the Jewish Targum paraphrases the expression by 'the King Messiah,' and even later Jewish commentators apply it to Him. Here then we have a song of Christ ; the establishment, exaltedness, and triumph of whose reign was faintly prefigured in, but distinctly promised to, David.

Miserable indeed would the anticipations of the ancient Church have been, had her hopes of the promise centred in the successors of David. As miserable as our hopes, were we to externalize His precious assurances concerning the Church, and to apply them to any outward or visible community. For the Church 'of the first-born' is, in this dispensation, invisible, and has not yet appeared, even as under the former dispensation her Lord had been yet unseen, and the object of hope. And all that is now said of the one and indivisible Church of Christ, must be viewed as only applying to the present and visible Church, in the same sense in which the Old Testament promises of Christ applied to the house of David. Nay, it almost seems as if the Lord had allowed the outward estate of David's line thus purposely to run

low, lest the hope of Israel should rest on such earthly stays, even as He has allowed the imperfections and divisions in the present Church, in order the more fully to fix our minds and hearts upon the hope of His coming.

Yet, in a most important, and in the only true sense, are we as a Church one and perfect in Christ Jesus our Lord. 'The whole family in heaven and earth,' owns 'one Lord,' even as we cherish one faith, and have professed in one baptism. The longing anticipations of the Church in our days formed the hope of that under the old dispensation, and her songs of expectant triumph are ours also. This is specially apparent in our Psalm, which differs from others notably in that it is a *song of the Church*; not the prayer of David, but the praise of Israel. What in Ps. xx. was matter of *faith* is here subject of *hope*, and gladsome bursts it from the lips of those who already see its initial typical fulfilment, and in it, afar off, 'the day of Christ.' It is a singular privilege, and one of the characteristics of the Church, that she is allowed to act as God's remembrancer (Isa. xliii. 26; lxii. 7). The promises which belong to Christ we may plead, so that, wondrous to think, *we* may pray for Him who prays for us. This indeed is the highest glory of *our* identification with Christ—that we have share with Him who took share with us, and that, as He associates Himself with us in our low estate, He also associates us with Him in His exaltedness. 'This honour have all His saints,'—to place themselves by His side as 'sons of God' and 'heirs of glory.' Thus, every time we pray for the coming of the kingdom, we in reality put on our kingly robes. And the highest position which believers can

here attain, is to take up the word of the Lord, and to embody it in a song of hope.

The abruptness with which the Psalm opens well befits the point of view which our faith occupies: 'Jehovah, in Thy strength the King shall rejoice; and in Thy salvation how shall he jubilee greatly!' The idea of *strength* here conveyed is not that of inherent but of manifested strength, and not merely for defence but for attack, as in the analogous prayer (Isa. xli. 9): 'Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Jehovah.' The term also occurs in connexion with the result of such manifested strength or *praise*. The precious truth contained in the assurance that 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth,' is, as it were, infinitely multiplied in its application to Christ and His kingdom. 'He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied.' Most blessedly, because most pointedly, are our narrow views of the love of God here rebuked. His delight was ever with the children of men, and when the time shall come for making bare His holy arm and manifesting His salvation, how greatly shall He rejoice! To be in sympathy with Christ in this respect implies not only a believing but a joyous anticipation of our redemption. But it is impossible to rejoice in the coming of Christ without having first rejoiced that Christ *has* come. The Church beholds Christ as having already received the government (ver. 2). When God raised Him from the dead, He exalted Him to be 'a Prince and a Saviour.' That for which He died *has* been achieved; that which He asked *has* been granted. The finished work of Christ *has* been accepted. He loved us,

and gave Himself for us ; and 'Thou hast given Him His heart's desire.' He interceded for us, and obtained the blessings of salvation. 'Thou hast not withholden the request of His lips.' Those who have been set free know what great deliverance theirs was, and to whom they owe it. Why should it be so difficult for us to realize the intensity of His love and the completeness of His work ? Yet does assurance not spring up within our own hearts. It flows from a view of Christ on the cross. When we feel ourselves bound up with Him, and read our case in the granting of His heart's desire, we are joyous, because consciously safe. So far as the expressions (ver. 2) may be referred to our own entreaties, Luther rightly notes that the desire of the heart must ever precede the request of the lips. But it is sweeter to apply them exclusively to Christ.

The description which follows (vers. 3-6) almost reads like an account of the reception of Christ upon His ascension into heaven. In the welcome which the risen Saviour received may we read our own welcome, for it greeted Him in His capacity as Head of the Church. 'The blessings of goodness' which met Him were that fulness out of which we all have received, 'and grace for grace.' 'The crown of pure gold' was the royal diadem of our King, or His investiture with dominion over the earth, implying its final subjection to His sway. The eternal 'length of days' was the continuance of His mediatorial office, in virtue of which 'He remaineth a priest for ever.' The greatness of His glory, honour, and majesty, consisteth in this, 'that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things

on earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' The blessedness which He enjoys, and His exceeding gladness with God's countenance, is the Father's good pleasure. And all this is bound up with our salvation. The Church is therefore a most deeply interested witness of Messiah's triumphs. And entering more fully into the spirit of ver. 6, we read it, 'Thou hast set Him to be blessings for ever ; Thou hast gladdened Him with joy in Thy countenance.' The Father is well pleased for His righteousness' sake. 'The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hands.' Thus has the promise made to Abraham been fulfilled (Gen. xii. 2): 'I will bless thee, and make thy name great ; and thou shalt be a blessing.'

There is a manifest transition in ver. 7, from the song of praise addressed to the Father in the previous verses, to that of believing anticipation, which constitutes the second half of this Psalm. Though couched in Old Testament language, and primarily viewed as applying to the son of Jesse, ver. 7 is unquestionably true of King Jesus. Unbroken trust formed the filial element in the obedience of Christ, which is expressly mentioned (Phil. ii. 7, 8 ; Heb. v. 8, 9 ; xii. 2, and in other places) as the ground of His royal exaltation, and of the establishment of His kingdom. 'For the King trusteth in Jehovah, and through the mercy of the Most High He shall not be moved.' A more precious fact than the *eternal* stability of the throne of David could not be conceived. As Calvin remarks, while all things in this world turn like a wheel, the kingdom of Judah, or rather its antitype, that of

Christ, forms an exception. In Him all the promises are Yea and Amen. And this by 'the favour,' 'grace,' 'love'—or, as rendered in our version, 'by the mercy'—'of the Most High.' The latter expression prepares us for a conflict, in which His supremacy appears in the continuance of grace, and therefore in the continuance of His kingdom. For its permanency depends on the continuous supply of His grace. And here it is, in one sense, most comforting to us to find the enemies directly called '*Thine* enemies,' and 'those that hate *Thee*.' To be thus identified with Christ argues the goodness of our cause, and gives pledge of certain victory. In truth, it is 'against the Lord and His Anointed,' and not against us, that they imagine a mischievous device. It is impossible for them to attack the cause of God otherwise than through His people. And it is always safe to place ourselves by the side of God's saints, especially in seasons of general lukewarmness or defection. With a rapidity and completeness which is awful, does judgment overtake the enemies (vers. 9, 10). Yet shall it appear that, after all, it was in their power only to '*intend* evil,' and to '*imagine* a mischievous device,' but that 'they are *not able* to perform it' (ver. 11). We are far too fearful of the haters of the Lord. Their power equals not their purpose. He holds them in rein Who at any moment can arrest them. Most of our perils exist in apprehension only. This applies both to the Church and to individual Christians. Were we content to leave the morrow till the morrow, ours were a more unbroken calm. The enemies only gape upon us ; they cannot devour. To-day is light, because Christ bears it with us ; the to-morrow

is heavy, because it contains an immeasurable burden. The darkest periods of the Church's and of our own history have been those of such forward-looking. His Word assures us that '*all* things must work together for good to them that love Him,' and it were difficult indeed to find any event not included in this universal term. To go forward in faith, not in self-confidence, but in reliance upon Jesus, upon His finished work and His immovable kingdom, with all that this implies, is not only most blessed relief, but true wisdom. The non-ability of His enemies will we call to mind whenever the cause of God, or His Word, or His ordinances are attacked. It is an attempt at impossibility. Most graphic also is the description of the utter helplessness of such enemies, almost reminding us of the prayer of despair, for rocks and hills to fall upon them and cover them from the wrath of God and of the Lamb. In this sense, ver. 12 has been most correctly paraphrased: 'But Thou wilt put them to precipitate flight, and constrain them to turn their back. They turn indeed their back, wounded by Thine arrows; but Thou meetest them when flying, and dartest in their faces deadly missiles.' How safely may we leave God's cause in God's hand, whether that cause be represented by the interests of the Church, or by the wellbeing of an individual believer! Meantime it is ours simply to look up (ver. 13). The prayer or expressed longing for Christ's exaltation in His 'own strength,' for His taking the government and reigning, is the Old Testament cry: 'Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' In this 'larger hope of the Church' every individual and special manifestation of His holding 'the Key of David' and

having 'the government upon His shoulder' is included. Ours it is to 'sing and praise' the power of King Jesus—now, and in every display of His strength, which is an initial, and, as it were, typical fulfilment of the grand hope of His Church. Thus again closes this Psalm with the hope of the Church, and with the expression of those deep feelings towards Jesus which form the essence of all spiritual religion.

1. The finished work of Jesus is the ground of our faith and joy. The Church can never weary of this theme. It is ever 'news,' and ever 'good news.' That the work which the Father has given Him has been finished, and that He has entered into His glory, is the joyous consolation of His people. 'Thou hast led captivity captive ; Thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also.' The facts of His passion, death, resurrection, and ascension are never really past ; they are an eternal present. Let me this day turn as a weary thirsty pilgrim to these wells of water. Jesus alone can afford comfort and strength. The conviction that He has died for me, and now liveth for me, is the very essence of believing application of the gospel. Have I a right to make this application ? Yes ; for faith may ever make personal application ; faith *may* whatever it *can*. Its limits, if such there be, are ever within, not without. Nor let me imagine that I shall ever find either peace or pardon otherwise than in the person and work of Jesus. And that *whatever* the circumstances of the case or my special wants may be.

2. Let me rest assured that all undertakings against Christ, whether in His flock or in His sheep, in the Church or in the souls of believers, must fail. They are, from the first,

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smitten with impotence. The danger only lies in our undue interference. 'But rather *give place* unto wrath.' We are apt, by taking judgment into our own hands, to put obstacles in the way of, or to obstruct, His dealings. Here we feel, on the one hand, the danger of unbelief, and, on the other, that of an improper or uncharitable frame of mind towards others. Perhaps after all they are not what they seem,—His enemies. To be zealous for the truth, and not against individuals, needs *much* grace. Yet, what matters it what people say against the Lord, the Lord's day, the Lord's cause, the Lord's people, or the Lord's Word? Whenever I can put my Lord's name upon anything it is safe. And how sweet to think that the red cord insures safety even to Rahab's house and kindred! An anxious mind is an unbelieving mind. Full of cares is full of self. Cast over the tackling and the lading, if you are to reach the shore in safety. Where Christ is they fall backward who are sent out against Him.

3. I would not be full of cares and empty of Christ; not a ship in ballast, but holding goodly merchandise. And with this view let me seek to have more of Christ. Let me dwell with delight on what He is and on what He has done, and every lesson I learn let me store in my heart of hearts, and still ever *love* it better than I *know* it. To share in the Church's song of triumph is granted even here to our faith. And we look for His coming. Undismayed by the devices of His enemies, and unshaken by their scoffing, we wait for it, according to *His promise*. Nor let us imagine that the improvements upon the simplicity of the gospel attempted by half-hearted believers, who trim their sails to catch every

breeze of popularity, will ever lead to any result. The gospel cannot be improved, and the world will not be improved ; ' he that is righteous, let him be righteous still ; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still.' The tone of the gospel cannot be lowered, and the tone of the world cannot be raised. These miserable devices will no more succeed than the attacks of open enemies. But let it be ours to stand by the gospel in all its simplicity. The cross of Christ will always be an unpopular doctrine, and the coming of the Lord will alone put an end to the present state of matters. In view of that day, let us be thoroughly earnest, honest, and upright in our Christianity. And still let us comfort ourselves in waiting, in praying, and in working, with this blessed and sure hope : ' Be Thou exalted, Jehovah-Jesus, in *Thine own* strength.' Both now and hereafter ' so will we sing and praise Thy power.'

FEAR not, O little flock, the foe
Who madly seeks your overthrow,
Nor dread his rage and power :
What though your courage sometimes faints,
His seeming triumph o'er God's saints
Lasts but a little hour.

As true as God's own word is true,
Not earth or hell, with all their crew,
Against us shall prevail.
A jest and byword are they grown :
God is with us—we are His own—
Our victory cannot fail.

ALTENBURG.

(GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS'S BATTLE-SONG)
(*Lyra Germanica.*)

XXXI.

THE AGONY.

- 1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?
Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring ?
- 2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not ;
And in the night season, and am not silent.
- 3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
- 4 Our fathers trusted in thee : they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
- 5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered : they trusted in thee, and were
not confounded.
- 6 But I am a worm, and no man ; a reproach of men, and despised of the
people.
- 7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn :
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
- 8 He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him :
Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
- 9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb ;
Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.
- 10 I was cast upon thee from the womb : thou art my God from my mother's
belly.
- 11 Be not far from me, for trouble is near ; for there is none to help.

PSALM XXII.

THIS is the Psalm of Psalms, in which 'Christ Jesus is evidently set forth' crucified among us. There is not a passage in the Old Testament, not even Isa. liii., in which 'the

sufferings of Christ and the glory to come' are more fully delineated. What only, in a very secondary sense, could have applied either to David or to the Church, is here set before us, so that, while generally Christ is seen through David, it almost seems as if now David were only seen through Christ. We scarcely wonder that, when expounding this Psalm, Luther should have shut himself up for three days and three nights to be alone with its grand realities. In three stanzas (each of ten verses, ver. 11 forming a transition), the inward sufferings, the outward afflictions, and the 'fruit' of the great Redeemer's 'travail,' are described in language which alternately fills us with awe and with intense joy and praise. If we tremble when descending into the depths of His agony, we glory when the record of His conquests is opened before us. In the latter (vers. 22-31) the middle wall of separation between Jew and Gentile is seen to be broken down, the distinction between poor and rich is removed (ver. 29), and finally even the narrow boundaries of time are burst (vers. 30, 31). And over all this we write, *Love*. For us He humbled Himself, for us He died, for us He rose again, for us He sitteth and pleadeth at God's right hand. Alas! how unworthy are *we*, but how glorious is *He* whose death is our life! So exact, indeed, is the portraiture of His sufferings as recorded by the Evangelists, and of the salvation of the world as connected with His resurrection, that, as one has aptly said, we seem to read, 'not so much prophecy, as history.' In meditating upon this Psalm it is not allowed us to enter fully into its mysterious depths, but between the lines do we everywhere read the words '*for us*,'

and, wondering and joying, take them as the key to unlock its untold treasures.

All at once, and without preparation, we descend into the lowest depth. The light, or rather the lightning, which first breaks in upon the dense darkness, reveals Golgotha. The first utterance heard is one of the last sayings on the cross: 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? far from my deliverance, the words of my roaring.' Yet not a cry of despair this, only one of agony and of longing. The heaviest burden, *the* burden which weighed down the Saviour, was neither physical suffering, nor, primarily, the malice and wrath of His enemies. It was a sense of His forsakenness on the part of the Father, consequent upon His bearing the accumulated guilt of His people. It was this which 'He feared,' and in reference to which finally He 'was heard' (Heb. v. 7). For He could not leave His soul in hell, neither could His Holy One see corruption. The believing soul which has in small measure realized the awfulness of guilt, and apprehended the wrath of a holy and righteous God as necessarily connected with it, has looked but a very short way into that abyss into which Jesus descended when His holy Person, which shrunk from sin, was burdened with the load of His people's guilt, and when the countenance of the Father was withdrawn. As if in sympathy, the sun veiled himself, and earth quaked in that tremendous hour when the guilt of the Church laid upon Jesus was nailed to the cross, and hung between earth and heaven. Nor was this merely an *apprehension* of the withdrawal of God. In His mediatorial capacity, in His inmost being as the Christ, Jesus felt

Himself actually forsaken. Not even the Father's infinite love could lighten that burden. It was there; it was our burden; and it must be borne, in order to be borne away. In connexion with this central fact in the history of humanity, it may be noted, that because Christ came, no man could say that God has 'forsaken' him; nor would any dare to ask '*why* hast Thou forsaken me?' But all this because Jesus was actually forsaken. Yet the repeated cry, 'My God, my God,' also indicates the firmness of His cleaving to the Father, and is in itself the pledge of His victory. Even then and there, and all the more there, it is '*my* God, *my* God.' And through latest ages does this voice from the cross sound, waking the echoes in our hearts. Never can the stillness of death brood over our earth since that utterance of the dying Christ.

There hangs the Christ, a spectacle of woe, crucified by me, crucified for me! And what shall I render to the Lord for all His gifts to me? O amazing gift of grace, all too great for me to comprehend! Who could be unbelieving, or distrust the efficacy of that work, that had understood its character? To that cry of agony comes no response. An infinite distance, but only a *distance*, seems to separate 'the words of my roaring' from 'my deliverance.' There is deliverance, but far off. The cup must be drained to its last bitter dregs. O my sin, thou art the wormwood in the Redeemer's cup of suffering; O my guilt, thou art the cause of this distance of help! The cry is loud, like the 'roaring' of a lion (to which the term properly refers), yet articulate, bodying itself forth in the language of prayer, as 'the *words* of my roaring.' These

'words of roaring' were thus really words of intercession ; and the blood of our Abel, shed by fratricidal Cain, truly 'spake better things ;' not vengeance, but pardon and peace. And this cry on the cross was only the *expression* of the last and concentrated 'agony' which had long filled His soul, made it 'exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ;' so that 'His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.' 'From the *sixth* hour there was darkness over all the land,' but only 'about the *ninth* hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice,'—with the 'words of roaring.' This seems also implied in ver. 2, where for the third time we meet the to us heart-rending cry : 'O my God.' These words and these facts are ever present to us, whether for humiliation or for faith. *He is* 'the bread of life.'

It almost seems as if all the trees of the forest were trembling, and the ground itself shaken in which they are rooted, in the storm which bends the tree of life (vers. 3, 4, 5). All the promises and all their fulfilments had their root in Christ ; all past dealings in mercy were covenant dealings, centring in Israel's Head and King (vers. 4, 5). Nay, all Thy praise flowed from Thy covenant faithfulness ; and canst thou be silent now to Him in whom all is 'Yea and Amen ?' The foundations of the earth are moved in the agony of this contest. The waters went over His soul. 'But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.' Holiness is not only purity ; it is truth and faithfulness. As He 'dwelleth between the cherubim' (Ps. lxxx. 1, xcix. 1), so He inhabiteth the praises of Israel (the term and mode of expression being exactly the same). The covenant record of His dealings in

grace with His covenant people is a song which never dies out nor is past. Upborne upon these songs as upon the wings of the cherubim, His presence is manifested in Israel. More especially is it here the record of the deliverance from Egypt, so typical of the great salvation, which prominently stands forth (vers. 4, 5). And three times is the expression of *trust* here repeated, to indicate the dreadful character of the contest, the urgency of the need, and the greatness of the interposition. Trust, prayer, deliverance, and non-confusion, are here heaped upon each other to rear an Eben-ezer. Thou art holy—it cannot be: Thou didst manifest Thyself of old—it cannot be; the past, the present, Thyself declare it—it cannot be. Thus, He ‘offered up prayers and supplications *with strong* crying and tears;’ and thus also we see our Christ, as it were, living through the history of Israel, and impressing Himself as a seal upon their records.

But yet deeper does the Divine Redeemer descend. In language of which Isa. liii. is the echo, He describes Himself: ‘But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people,’—this, as if to explain how He seems to form an exception to the rule of Divine Help. Jesus has gone lower than man, by becoming the representative of humanity in its guilty and lost state. O my soul, if such views of Christ banish not all unbelief, break not all hardness, and melt not all coldness, thou hast never seen the cross nor beheld the Man. And most expressively is that term used for ‘worm’ which properly signifies the purple-worm, whose blood formed the dye for the royal purple. It was this which was used in the priestly garments (Ex. xxviii.), and in

the ceremonial for cleansing the leper (Lev. xiv. 4). Our High Priest wears the priestly garment dyed in His own blood, and cleanses the leper with the same precious flood. The typical becomes all true. To the letter was the prophecy in vers. 7, 8 unwittingly fulfilled under the cross. The taunting words of them 'that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads : He trusted in God ; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him,' have their counterpart in ver. 8 : ' Roll upon Jehovah ; let Him deliver Him ; let Him help Him, for He' (Jehovah) 'had pleasure in Him' (the Christ). And yet this is most precious testimony, even on the part of His enemies, of His constant application to the Father. None of these could testify any evil of Him ; even their false witness did not agree. They only testified to their own unbelief, just as in our low and false thoughts of Christ we testify only against ourselves. And what solemn and to them awful fulfilment of their taunt will be presented in that day ! O kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way. Yet by much higher even than the terrors of the Lord, by the dying love of Jesus and the covenant-mercy of our God, do we beseech men to be reconciled unto God.

There is a uniqueness not only about the sufferings and about the Person, but also about the life of Christ. This apparent lowness, this constancy of struggle ; this humility of birth and absoluteness of dependence upon God from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary, are characteristic of the 'Man of sorrows' (vers. 9, 10). And there is peculiar emphasis in the expression : 'Thou art my God from my mother's belly.' We remember the history of His

incarnation and the song of Mary, and it is most significant that the reference is only to His *mother*, with still higher application to His *Father who is in heaven*. The mystery of birth and of dependence becomes unique and becomes sanctified in the birth of the Second Adam: not like the first Adam from the earth by the word of His power, but from woman by the Spirit of His grace; not under sin as we are, but 'holy, harmless, undefiled by sin.' And now by the mystery of His incarnation, which held to God, does this One Man, forsaken by man, and alone against men, and alone for men, cling alone to God (ver. 11). Thus the mystery of His incarnation becomes, as it were, fulfilled, or completely opened, applied, and verified in His sufferings and death. A unique Person, a unique birth, a unique life, unique sufferings, a unique death, clinging with every fibre to humanity, clinging with every thought and feeling to Divinity,—true Man and true God, *our* Covenant-Head and *His* Covenant-Mediator. O 'the faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation;' O 'the mystery of godliness into which angels desire to look;' O the great 'mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory!'

1. 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.' We are in full view of the Redeemer, crucified for us. The accursed tree has become the tree of life. Two considerations are here of primary importance,—His perfect righteousness and His entire substitution. By His perfect obedience in suffering

and in doing, He discharged the debt, and brought in everlasting righteousness. By His substitution He took our place, and lifted us to His place. Christ became the representative Israelite, the true son of David, the King of Israel ; nay, the second Adam. And now the way into the Holiest of all is open to us. The work is finished ; all has been endured and done ; and ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.’ So far as *He* is concerned, there is neither let nor hindrance. This day let me avail myself of this wondrous provision of His grace ; and since ‘the Spirit and the bride say, Come,’ let me come, believe, and live.

2. What infinite depth of love was this which moved our Saviour thus to sound the depths of untold agony ! There was no claim on our part ; nothing but misery to call forth compassion. Yet He loved us and gave Himself for us. This free outgoing of His love, this full manifestation of His grace, is the ground on which, guilty and lost, we are warranted in approaching Him. In the sufferings of Jesus I read my awful guilt, and also my free invitation to receive a pardon which His love has provided and His righteousness has procured. ‘The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin.’ Tears, sorrow, penitence, effort on our part, could never have availed to remove the guilt. Then, when Israel had *destroyed* itself, Jehovah was our help. He interposed, and interposed Himself. He gave Himself, and wholly gave Himself. To doubt now were to doubt Him—to make Him a liar. O that this height and depth, this length and breadth of love, were ever present to my heart ! Alas, how cold and

insensible am I! Let me go anew to Calvary, and with the women stand afar off. And can eternity itself suffice to sing the praises of such redeeming love?

3. Yet this day must I make practical application of the blood of the cross. I will come anew and *wash* away all my stains, as if I had never come before. Broken and contrite in heart, will I there seek pardon and peace. Putting, yet not in unbelief, my 'finger into the print of the nails,' I will *adore* 'my Lord and my God.' 'My soul shall *rejoice* in God my Saviour,' and 'I will *love* Thee, Jehovah my strength.' Yea, by word and deed, in heart and life, by work and patience, will I *show forth* the praises of Him who hath brought me out of darkness into His marvellous light.

AH Head, so pierced and wounded,
So full of pain and scorn;
Ah Head, in jest surrounded
With a sharp crown of thorn;
Ah Head, once wreathed with glory,
And bright with shining rays,—
Now mocked and scorned,—before Thee
I bow in silent praise.

O Lord, my soul's true Lover,
What bliss dost Thou bestow
By making me discover
My weal in Thy sad woe!
Grant then that I may ever
Abide, O Lord, in Thee;
Nor let e'en death dis sever
My faithful soul from Thee!

Hymnologia Christiana.

XXXII.

THE CROSS AND THE CROWN.

- 11 BE not far from me ; for trouble is near ; for there is none to help.
12 Many bulls have compassed me : strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.
13 They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.
14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint :
My heart is like wax ; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.
15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd ; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws ;
And thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
16 For dogs have compassed me ; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me ;
They pierced my hands and my feet.
17 I may tell all my bones ; they look and stare upon me.
18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.
19 But be not thou far from me, O Lord : O my strength, haste thee to help me.
20 Deliver my soul from the sword ; my darling from the power of the dog.
21 Save me from the lion's mouth ; for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.
22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren :
In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.
23 Ye that fear the Lord, praise him :
All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him ; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.
24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted ;
Neither hath he hid his face from him ; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

- 25 My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation :
I will pay my vows before them that fear him.
- 26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied ;
They shall praise the Lord that seek him : your heart shall live for ever.
- 27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord ;
And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
- 28 For the kingdom is the Lord's ; and he is the governor among the nations.
- 29 All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship :
All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him ;
And none can keep alive his own soul.
- 30 A seed shall serve him ; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.
- 31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness
Unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.—PSALM XXII.

ONCE more do we approach Calvary. What a company surrounds the Saviour in the agony of His soul, in His agony with God ! Another wave, this time from without, threatens to swallow Him up. 'Trouble is *near*,' 'and not a helper' (ver. 11). Jehovah cannot be 'far' from Him. Anon we shall hear it, 'It is finished.' But the cup which His Father gave Him, shall He not drink it ? Fury and strength are combined against Him. '*Many*' and '*strong* bulls' from the mountain solitudes of Bashan 'compass' and 'beset' Him. 'A ravening and a roaring lion'—'they gape' upon Him 'with their mouths.' It seems as if all fallen creation, represented by wild beasts and the arch-enemy ('as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour,' 1 Pet. v. 8), were let loose upon Him. And in these figures concerning the animal world do we learn not only the story of our fall and relative position to creation, but also how (as one observes) the instincts of the animal world were measured and viewed in the light of the moral principles of humanity. Now He

endures the worst that men and devils can inflict. Draw yet nearer and behold the 'Man of sorrows,'—the open wounds pouring forth His precious blood, the 'bones out of joint,' as He hangs on the cross; the agony of death, the weakness, the thirst, and the last struggle (vers. 14, 15). And all this for *us*! Not one woe in the range of suffering that could afflict Him is omitted, 'that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.' Were it not for the other side, for the glorious resurrection morning, we should for ever hide our faces in this hour of greatest darkness. O my soul, thou wast there under this cross in the person of thy representatives, who, as if designedly to include us all, are described under figures, embodying the principles of fallen humanity. Yet how marvellous that Divine love has placed in this very act of my direst guilt the plea and the warrant for my highest privilege and bliss! That I have stood under this cross includes me among those *for* whom Christ died. Thus is grace ever changing the scarlet dye of our sin into the whiteness of snow. And how awfully faithful is the description of the crucifixion! We learn its agonies almost better from this Psalm than even from the records in the Gospels. Deepest of all woes, the Father allowed this rebellious fury of the elements to burst around Him: '*Thou* hast brought Me into the dust of death.' 'It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; *He* hath put Him to grief.' He 'was *delivered* for our offences.' 'He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin.' 'Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.' 'But God com-

mendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'

Here we stand and lowly worship before viewing the final agony. The peculiar horror of the cross (Tertullian's *propria atrocitas crucis*), the piercing of His hands and feet, as the great preponderance of evidence leads us to understand ver. 16, is introduced by another figurative description. The 'dogs' by whom He is compassed are 'the congregation of the wicked'—the rendering 'assembly' in our version failing to present the sad truth. The word here used is one of the proper designations of the ancient Church. In one sense the Church under the cross is 'the congregation of the wicked,' not merely as applying to Israel, which crucified its King, but with reference to what the Church really is, when viewed, and specially under the cross of Christ, without the garment of His Righteousness. Here, if ever, we feel ourselves as belonging to 'the congregation of the wicked.' And here, if ever, do we understand the meaning and the exchange of grace. This peculiarity of the cross, which seemed more particularly to symbolize its curse, is also referred to in Isa. liii. 5, 'He was pierced for our transgressions' (not 'wounded,' as in our version); and in Zech. xii. 10, 'They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced.' What is added of telling or counting all His bones—which are out of joint by reason of His crucifixion,—of the parting of His garments, even to the detail of casting lots upon His vesture, or inner garment (John xix. 23-24), has been so literally fulfilled, and that only in Christ, that the most determined unbelief can scarcely deny its application to Him. But every such historical ful-

filment is chiefly of value as affording confirmation of the deep and personally applicable spiritual truths of which prophecy and miracle—the wonder of word and the wonder of deed—are alike designed as evidences. And to this spiritual kernel will we keep, thankful to Him who has so provided it for us as in a twofold envelope.

Again, but now after enduring all inward agony and all outward assault, comes the cry for help and deliverance, and that with reference to the threefold evil apprehended: ‘my soul from the sword,’ ‘my only one from the hand of the dog,’ and ‘me from the lion’s mouth.’ But He *has* already overcome, by having endured all that could be endured. ‘And thou *hast* heard me from the horns of the buffaloes.’ ‘It is finished. And He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.’ And His death was not only the real termination of His sufferings, but the commencement of His triumph. By His death He swallowed up death in victory. This is the last view got of the old enemies, Satan and Death, so far as concerns that absolute sway, which they had formerly exercised. They are now vanquished, and only await execution of sentence.

Here commences an entirely new order of things. That which has just been enacted forms no longer ground of apprehension ; but is proclaimed as cause of praise. The transaction on Calvary is published as the gospel. The inscription on the cross is written in all known languages. The universal bearing of this unique fact forms the basis of ver. 22. The vicarious sufferings and obedience of the Saviour apply as ground of proclamation of mercy to all. And thus He became indeed our Brother, even as by the application of the

benefits of His work to us He maketh us truly His 'brethren.' So this verse is also explained in Heb. ii. 12, where the term rendered in our version as 'congregation' is correctly given by 'Church,'—for these two words, in Hebrew and Greek, seem both in their etymology and meaning to cover each other. Very noteworthy also is it how praise is ascribed unto the Father 'in the midst of the Church,' in connexion with the work of the Son. For not only the holiness and truth of our God, and His mercy in saving guilty men, appears therein, but especially His love in the gift of His dear Son. This surrender implies the deepest love on His part, as deep as that of Him who surrendered Himself. Marked also is the distinction of preaching among the 'brethren,' and praising in 'the Church.' The declaration of the gospel itself in ver. 24, is prefaced by what has been designated as a magnificent *Introit*, in which the Israel of God is called to fear, to honour, and to dread before Him. For the announcement of the gospel must be accompanied with such feelings as holy 'fear and trembling,' in beholding both 'the goodness and the severity of God,' and with honour and praise to Him whose compassion and love are so infinite. The gospel itself is announced in ver. 24. The glad tidings of great joy consist neither in the commandment to believe, nor in any warning to unbelievers, nor primarily even in an invitation to come to Jesus ; but simply in the announcement of the fact that God *has* accepted the work of Christ ; that He *has* made an end of sin, and that the purposes of the covenant *have* been attained. 'And being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him' (see the context in

Heb. v. 9). That God has not hid His face from the Christ, nor despised His affliction, but heard Him, *is the gospel*, the announcement of His accepted work, and consequently of His resurrection. On this ground we announce the forgiveness of sins through the mercy of our God. The correctness of this view appears also from the terms in which this message of the gospel is conveyed. God has not despised nor abhorred 'the affliction of the afflicted,' the term for 'affliction' here indicating the inward bending of the soul, which is also mentioned in Isa. liii. 4, 7, and in Zech. ix. 9. The word rendered 'afflicted' conveys the idea of outward suffering—and the Father is said not to have 'abhorred' this affliction, as referring to its connexion with guilt; so that it is full in view of His work as substitutionary that the Father 'hid not His face from Him,' but heard His cry.

On the ground of this gospel, or announcement of a finished and accepted salvation, do we invite all men to repent and believe. Accordingly, the gospel-feast is here enacted. The truths embodied in the parable of the King's supper—which is ready, and to which all are invited, but of which only those who have the wedding-garment of spiritual meekness are allowed to partake—are here seen to underlie the sacrificial ordinances (vers. 25, 26). His praise resounds in the great congregation; the great sacrifice has been offered; and now 'the flesh of the sacrifice of His *peace-offerings* for thanksgiving shall be eaten' (comp. Lev. ix.) To this sacrificial feast all the '*meek*' are invited, with the assurance of intense satisfaction, and the further promise, not only that they who seek shall find, but that they shall praise Jehovah, in the joy

of His salvation. Nay, the King Himself welcomes the guests at His table, with the covenant-promise, not only of present but of future safety, or of perseverance to the end: 'Let your heart live for ever' (ver. 26). Louder and louder swells the song of triumph, rising as high as formerly the cry of agony had descended low. Far beyond the present stage extends the gospel its untold blessings. The middle wall of partition between Israel and the Gentiles is broken down. The long-forgotten knowledge of God and tidings of His Son are 'remembered,' 'the ends of the world' are converted unto Jehovah, and 'all the kindreds of the nations worship before' Jesus (ver. 27). What a day this, and what fruit of His travail! And all this of right. For the Father hath invested Him, in His mediatorial capacity, with 'the kingdom' and governorship (ver. 28). Earth and men cannot remain in rebellion against Him who lived and died on earth, who lived and died for men. And yet farther does the prophetic vision sweep. Once more at the end of that dispensation is a feast prepared. The King has returned, and His guests are gathered to Him. The distinction between rich and poor, high and low, is abolished, and equally they all come. 'Eat and worship shall all earth's fat ones, before Him bend down all that go down to the dust, and that kept not alive their souls.' 'And in this mountain shall Jehovah of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord

God will wipe away tears from off all faces ; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth.'

And with a grand Hallelujah closes this Psalm, forming the true interpretation of the last utterance on the cross : ' It is finished.' All bounds of time are burst, the Church is founded, eternal upon the Rock. ' A seed which shall serve Him shall be numbered to the Lord for a generation,' and ever added to His people. Witnesses shall everywhere arise, and to nations yet unborn shall the righteousness of Jesus be declared—'that He hath *done* this.' Thus, with a word which recalls the completion of the first creation (Gen. ii. 3), closes the account of the second creation, and here commences the eternal Sabbath. ' Amen ! Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.'

1. How glorious is the prospect which Messiah's death and triumph opens to the Church and to our earth ! Till then many questions must remain unanswered, and much disharmony unresolved. The destiny of Israel, and of the world, will be graciously decided when He returneth to take the kingdom unto Himself. The Church needeth such promises to keep her watchful and believing. Not an uncertain, nor a distant future is before us. We labour not as they who have no hope ; and we believe that all events in Providence, however different they may seem, tend to prepare the way of His coming. It is of the deepest practical importance to keep our minds and hearts fixed upon that blessed day of deliverance. Thus shall we understand the signs of the times, and be able to improve them. Thus also shall we ' comfort one another with these words.' Our dead, ' the dead in Christ,

shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.' To labour as in view of all this—of the great 'feast in this mountain'—is to contend in prospect of victory. But are we prepared, and preparing, for 'the day of the Lord'? More than ever do we here feel the need of Thy sovereign grace to teach and uphold us, that so we may be 'unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.'

2. The gospel is the announcement of a blessed fact—that God has provided a way of escape in Christ Jesus, and that He has accepted His perfect righteousness and finished work in our room and stead. This we are to believe ; and the gospel call is an invitation addressed to one and all, on the ground of God's love, and of their own need, to credit these tidings, and to avail themselves of the benefits so proclaimed. Faith is our obedience to this invitation ; our rest upon that foundation ; our trust in what Love has provided, Righteousness effected, Justice accepted, and Truth and Grace dispensed. Thus our faith consisteth mainly of *credence* and of *acceptance*. About which of these two, my soul, art thou troubled ? Canst Thou distrust either His purpose or His work ? Most deeply do I feel my *need*. But there is sufficient provision, prepared by the Lord Himself, at the price of His precious blood. If there is not evidence of *infinite* compassion and love to the guilty in this, nowhere else could it be found. Then why hesitate to come ? Is it because of the unbelief and unwillingness of the heart which

is natural to us? Then let me ask His Holy Spirit to guide me, with this emphatic assurance upon my mind: 'If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?'

3. Once more, let us devoutly meditate over the last verses of this Psalm (vers. 23-31). What a wonderful arrangement has Divine grace made! See how deeply He has descended; see how suitable to our case the gospel-feast which He has spread; see how glorious the results; see how precious the end! Surely we 'shall eat and be *satisfied*.' And with Thyself, blessed Lord, who givest Thyself not only for us, but to us. Here let me worship before Him, wondering how such grace has reached me, and what that grace can effect even in me. This is Thy gospel. O lead me nearer to Thyself, and enable me now to joy in what Thy grace will so soon give Thy Church to enjoy.

SING, my tongue, the glorious battle
 With completed victory rife;
 And above the Cross's trophy
 Tell the triumph of the strife,—
 How the world's Redeemer conquer'd
 By surrendering of His life.

When, O Judge of this world, coming
 In Thy glory all Divine,
 Thou shalt bid Thy Cross's triumph,
 Bright above the stars to shine,
 Be the light and the salvation
 Of the people that are Thine!

Mediaeval Hymns and Sequences.
(Slightly altered.)

XXXIII.

FOLLOWING AFAR OFF.

- 1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?
Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring ?
2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not ;
And in the night season, and am not silent.
3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel !
4 Our fathers trusted in thee : they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered : they trusted in thee, and were
not confounded.
6 But I am a worm, and no man ; a reproach of men, and despised of the
people.
7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn :
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
8 He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him :
Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb ;
Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.
10 I was cast upon thee from the womb : thou art my God from my mother's
belly.
11 Be not far from me, for trouble is near ; for there is none to help.

PSALM XXII.

GENERAL REVIEW AND APPLICATION.

AFAR off, and only afar off, can believers here follow in the footsteps of the Master. He bore the cross,—we also bear it ; but it is not the 'accursed tree,' it is the tree on

which He hung, and which has burst into new life. Then it was winter, now it is spring, and buds and blossoms have appeared on the tree. Still ours it is to 'follow the Son of Man in His humiliation,' and we also have to 'die daily.' Even in the modified sense in which it applies to us, most awful are the experiences which this Psalm describes. Not all of us are called to pass through such deep waters, though all have spiritual understanding of what the Psalm implies. As Luther saith : 'Therefore let us lay up these words in our hearts, and carefully keep them till the convenient time when we shall require them. And let him who cannot comprehend them, remain with the people down below in the plain, while the disciples go up to Christ in the mountain (Luke vi. 12-17). For all the sayings of this Psalm do not equally apply to every one, even as all have not the same gifts, nor all the same sufferings. According to our varied wants, the Scriptures offer milk to babes, and wine and strong meat for those who are strong, so that as the weak find their proper sustenance in the Scriptures, so they also who are strong, and they who have to undergo a great fight of afflictions.'

Yet, let us mark that as so applying, in a secondary sense, to those who are tried and tempted, this Psalm perhaps more than any other refers exclusively to God's people. This appears from the very intensity of the cry, 'My God.' By this hope and truth the believer clings, as preserving him from utter despair. The fear and apprehension of desertion, caused by a view of ourselves, or by the assaults of the enemy, are such that it appears as if there were only 'a hair between death and life.' The waves seem closing all around

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us, and God is far 'from helping' us, and 'from the words' of our 'roaring.' Nor can we be 'silent,' until answer is made from the sanctuary (ver. 2). And this is another evidence of the gracious working of His Holy Spirit. Nor is there any argument derived either from His character (ver. 3), or from the history of His dealings (ver. 4, 5) which is not urged. And though it seems as if all this were uttered in the form of complaining contrast, yet does it offer fresh ground for hope and entreaty. So graciously does He allow us to pour out our whole heart, to make known all our doubts and difficulties, and to convert even these into pleas for mercy. The very taunts of our enemies furnish fresh ground for application. For, God cannot give us over to the will of our enemies, and we gladly accept the challenge to 'roll' our case over upon Him who is full of grace and of truth (ver. 8). The burden is too heavy for us, and we remember the admonition of the apostle: 'Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time; *casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.*' The fact that we are His creatures upon earth includes us in the number of those for whom His provision in grace has been made. This is further confirmed by our entire dependence upon Him, from the first moment of our existence (vers. 9, 10). And how otherwise could we stand in face of such enemies? Our felt inability appears (as Luther has it) in 'that inward anxiety, terror, and awe, so great and sudden as to wither and dry up the natural sap of all the members of our body' (ver. 16). Yet even here constant reference is made to God, and in this lies our hope of ulti-

mate deliverance. The awful desolation of the soul under apprehension of eternal death passes all description. 'Such is the raging of the furious enemy, that the prophet felt as if even the sharpness of the sword did not sufficiently describe it. Hence he mentions also the tearing of furious, raging dogs, and the mouth of the hungry lion, already gaping and ready to swallow us up, and the great and violent anger of the cruel unicorns.' All the more glorifying to Him is here the assurance that we *are* heard (ver. 22). And now the soul breaks forth into praise, setting forth the greatness, the sufficiency, the blessedness, and the eternally satisfying character of the salvation which we have experienced. To quote once more the words of Luther: 'Thus God does excellently, and very sweetly for us, so that all His people must love and praise Him, because His eyes behold and are turned upon the sorrowing and the poor; and the more despised and rejected a man is, the nearer to Him and the more gracious is God. As if He said: "See and learn by My example, who have been the most despised and rejected of men" (ver. 7), "but now am the most lovingly looked upon, received, and heard."' "

Viewed in this light, ours is a Psalm of believing despair, from which the soul gradually emerges into clear light. It marks the greatness of the danger, and the yet greater greatness of the help. All Jehovah's billows seem to go over the soul; nay, they mount so high as to pass beyond man, and to break at the feet of the God-man. And it is this fellowship of sorrow with Jesus which lightens up our cloud and removes our burden. Because this sorrow is so great, because

it mounts above man, and passes beyond him, because it breaks at the feet of the Redeemer, I am safe. The storm which He once conquered cannot overwhelm me. The barque which carries Christ can never be swamped. But such whirlwinds, uprooting and carrying before them everything fair and pleasant, such hand-to-hand conflicts of the soul with death, are not rare in the history of God's people. They are awful desolations ; but joy cometh in the morning. It seems as if we were to be driven from one line of defence to the other, till we come to the innermost line of the history of God's dealings, and of our original relationship to Him as His handywork—behind the bulwarks of which we would fain take up a tenable position. It cannot be denied that Thou wast the God of our fathers, and that their faith was not in vain. But how can I place myself on the same level with them? Inwardly and outwardly it is far otherwise with me. At least, however, I am the work of Thy hands. Thou canst not utterly forsake me. But I am a worm, and no man. Thus every foundation seems swept from under me. I am shut up to free grace alone. Then, what a glorious streak of morning light when the horns of the altar are reached ! (ver. 21). A loud and blessed song of praise bursts from our lips, proportionate to the felt misery of the long night. Then there are shouts of victory—kingdoms are subdued, the dead are raised to life again, and the smile of a new spring seems to gladden the earth. The suddenness and the greatness of the transition are equally marked. Oh, what a deliverance is this, effected solely by Divine grace, through the instrumentality of believing, self- and all-de-

spairing prayer! 'I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.'

1. O my soul, in the greatness of thy despair remember that this Psalm, which portrays thy struggle, is a Psalm of Christ. To Him it refers in its fullest meaning, because upon Him the iniquities of us all were made to meet. There is unspeakable comfort in this to my soul. Christ is the companion of our sorrows, or rather, Christ has borne our griefs. Sin, which is the sting of sorrow and of death, has been removed. 'Come unto *Me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest.' Let us look, not at the grief, but at Christ, and at the intensity of His love. What consolation in Christ! 'Who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ?' Ah! let me lose myself in Christ. Not I, but Christ. I am a member of Christ; Christ is in me, Christ is for me, Christ is with me.

2. Yet this is a hand-to-hand conflict with the powers of darkness. Advance, my soul, whither the great army of martyrs and saints have advanced, and where they have triumphed (vers. 2-5). But I am driven back. Not in the strength of others, not on general grounds, is that conflict to be decided (vers. 6-8). Yet again advance, my soul; thou art God's creature, and He cannot leave the work of His own hands (vers. 9-11). But again am I driven back; it is only the weakness of the creature that I feel in this unequal contest (vers. 12-18). But ah! once more advance, my soul; it is not history nor creation which are thy plea—it is all of grace. I entreat Thy power; I lay hold on Thine outstretched arm; I cast myself wholly and unreservedly upon

Thee for deliverance (vers. 19-22). All is of Thee, and all is of grace. And lo! now all is victory. Mine enemies are routed, and flee; for 'the kingdom is the Lord's.'

3. There remaineth therefore a rest—a Sabbath—for the people of God, a glorious Sabbath in Christ here, a more glorious Sabbath with Christ hereafter. Rest, my soul, then; for the agony of the garden is past, and victory is His!

BRIEF life is here our portion,
Brief sorrow, short-lived care;
The life that knows no ending—
The tearless life—is *there*.
O happy retribution!
Short toil, eternal rest;
For mortals and for sinners
A mansion with the blest!

The night was full of terror,
The morn is bright with gladness;
The Cross becomes our harbour,
And we triumph after sadness.
Yes! God my King and Portion,
In fulness of His grace
We then shall see for ever,
And worship face to face.

Then all the halls of Syon
For aye shall be complete;
And in the Land of Beauty
All things of beauty meet.

RHYTHM OF S. BERNARD.

XXXIV.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

- 1 THE Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
- 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : he leadeth me beside the still waters.
- 3 He restoreth my soul : he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil :
For thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

PSALM XXIII.

THIS sweet Psalm of rest appropriately follows upon the previous description of the terrible contest, and the glorious victory achieved. The feast upon the sacrifice has been prepared, and here is the experience of those who have been bidden to share in it. Gethsemane and Calvary are past, and the morning of the resurrection has dawned. And now the soul need not cherish any further anxious care. Whether, as some suppose, this Psalm was written in a season of spiritual peace and refreshing, when nothing disturbed the enjoyment of His grace—as Calvin has it, His benefits forming the steps of the ladder by which he ascended ever nearer to God ; or whether, as seems more likely, it expresses calm and settled confidence in the Lord at all times, even in view of the

sharpest of pangs, those of death—the truths which it conveys are alike comforting. In the first verse the keynote is struck. Jehovah-Jesus is the Shepherd; He has become *our* Shepherd; and He provideth all. He is rest to the weary (ver. 2); quickening to the needy (ver. 3); safety and comfort in all danger (ver. 4); food and drink, and beauty to the hardly bestead (ver. 5); and that not only for time, but much more for eternity, so that, on a review of all His leadings, the experience of ver. 1 enlarges into the confident declaration of ver. 6. Thus have we ‘quietness and assurance,’ ‘peace and joy’ in believing.

It is indeed most difficult to enter fully into the experience of this Psalm. There is so much in it of what Christ *is* and of what Christ *does*, that after we have fed on these pastures and drunk of these waters, each according to his own wants, we feel that there is yet richest provision and most precious grace, all unnoticed by us, left for weary pilgrims. From first to last it is a *song* of praise to Him who is alike our Shepherd and our Host; who as our Shepherd is our Host, dispensing covenant provision in covenant mercy. For this expression, ‘Jehovah is our Shepherd,’ implies, indeed, everything needful for body and for soul, for time and for eternity. It indicates His constant faithfulness, care, provision, and defence. And it does so on the ground of His covenant relationship to us. ‘We are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.’ A sweeter or more precious designation of Christ than that of ‘Shepherd’ Scripture itself does not afford. It expresses His work *for* us by which He purchased us to be His flock, and His work *in* us

and *with* us, by which He taketh us in charge and careth for us. Accordingly, the one aspect of this truth is embodied in such prophecies as Zech. xi., and especially xiii. 7: 'Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow.' The other bearing of it had ever formed the hope of the Church, as in Isa. xl. 11: 'He shall feed his flock like a Shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.' (See also Ezek. xxxiv. 13-20; Micah vii. 14, 15.) And these promises have been amply fulfilled in Him who is 'the good Shepherd' (John x.), 'that great Shepherd of the Sheep' (Heb. xiii. 20), and to whom by grace we 'are now returned' as 'unto the Shepherd and bishop of our souls' (1 Pet. ii. 25).

Thus by faith do we apprehend Jesus as *our* Shepherd, and resign ourselves to His guidance. He hath all things, and therefore we cannot want anything. What we have, we have from Him and in Him, and other we desire not. Luther very sweetly remarks: 'All the other designations of God sound so glorious and majestic, that they invariably carry with them awe and fear, when we hear them pronounced. Thus, when Scripture calls God our Lord, King, Creator, etc. But the word "*Shepherd*" is not of this kind, but sounds so friendly, and conveys to God's people, whenever they read or hear it, immediately a sense of confidence, comfort, and security, like the word "*Father*."' If anything were required to increase our appreciation of this truth, it would be that the corresponding idea of *sheep*, as applying to His people, implies our weakness and helplessness. Thus in

our low and lost estate has He condescended to us, and meeteth all our wants in and by Himself. And here it is of the deepest importance to remember that this promise, or rather spiritual fact ('I shall not want'), holds good notwithstanding our feelings and apprehensions of desertion, sorrow, wrath, and fear. 'For straightway he turneth from his own feelings and lays hold upon God by His promise, and thinks, Let it be with me as it may, yet this is the comfort of my heart that I have a gracious, merciful Lord, who is my Shepherd, whose words and assurance strengthen and comfort me: therefore I shall not want. This alone is the golden art: to cling to His word and assurance, and to judge in accordance therewith, and not with the feelings of our hearts; then help and comfort will certainly follow, and nothing be wanting.' What an unlimited prospect is here opened to us; and how certainly may we, who have committed the keeping of our souls unto Him, dismiss all cares and anxieties! Yet is it only in measure as we realize the covenant-character of Christ, and our relationship to Him, that we can enjoy these promises.

The first benefit of which Christ's sheep are conscious, their first felt want supplied, is that of *rest*. This is frequently extolled in Scripture (Ps. cxvi. 7, and wherever the promise of *peace* is conveyed). And, indeed, our most urgent need is that of *rest*, in reference to the past, the present, and the future; in relation to God, to our own souls, and to our enemies. This is offered to us in Christ. He *giveth* it. Ours it is to seek *Christ*, His to give peace. No man ever found peace by seeking *it* primarily; every man may find it by seeking Christ. And this rest and our mode

of enjoying it are equally peculiar. '*He maketh* me to lie down' (the term being pastoral, employed for rest, especially in the heat of the day, as in Song i. 7) 'in pastures of fresh, soft, tender grass'—the term 'pasture' being derived from a word which originally denotes a place of rest, or an oasis,—'*He leadeth* me beside the waters of quietness.' In the heat and weariness of the day He selecteth for us such quiet resting-places in tender soft grass, and by the sweet murmuring of cool waters. And this in 'a weary land : ' what when the promise shall be fulfilled,—'The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters ; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes?' Nor is it only once and again, but by '*waters.*' There are *many* such rivers ; many promises, many manifestations, many providences, many coincidences, many and divers comforts which serve as resting-places—not to speak of His own precious ordinances, and of His still more precious presence. And though these resting-places have been provided, yet, as being foolish, weak, and helpless sheep, He *leadeth* us to them, and *causeth* us lie down in them. For, were it not for the guidance of the good Shepherd, sometimes for very tears we would not see, or for very weariness not find them ; or, like Hagar, seem ready to die in despair, almost within sound of the rippling fountain. How well knows He our case, how tenderly cares He for it ! 'And the peace of God, which *passeth all understanding, shall* keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.'

Such sweet rest do we enjoy in Jesus. All our sins are forgiven ; we are under His guidance, and gently, well,

safely, and comfortably He leadeth us. The *second* benefit resulting from our covenant-relationship to Him is *quickenings*. Rest without holiness were not Christ's rest, nor the Christian's peace. But here 'the good Shepherd' confers twofold favour upon us. He has given His life for the sheep, and He giveth His life unto the sheep. The Christian life is the life of Christ applied unto us. He is made of God unto us 'wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' At first 'He restoreth my soul,' bringeth it back, and causeth it to return, so that we are literally reminded of the description in 1 Pet. ii. 23. How far had we strayed from Him when He sought us, and with what infinite love and patience has He brought us back to Himself! Equally marked is the *power* of His grace, and the graciousness of His power. And still frequently have we to sing of such restorations, some so great as to seem almost new conversions. Most truly is the feeling of the soul, when brought from its darkness into the sunlight of His countenance, described as a *restoring*. For then we feel that formerly we had no life at all, and wonder at what through grace we now see, and hear, and feel. And what God has begun, He continueth and perfecteth. 'He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.' The form of the verb here employed gives the idea of assiduous, careful, and *special* leading, as in the parallel passage, Ps. cxliii. 10. This is the faithfulness of the good Shepherd. 'Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.' 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.' 'He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice.' Much careful, assi-

duous, and special leading is required to make us walk 'in the paths of righteousness.' And if we believe this, why should we murmur, doubt, or repine as to the *manner* in which the good Shepherd leadeth us? The object which He has in view, and the end of our journey He hath clearly revealed, and all the dispensations of His providence and of His grace are only the '*how*,' the manner in which He leadeth us. O weak and foolish heart, that knowest not what thou askest, nor what thou refusest, what thou hopest, nor what thou darest; that hast all too little faith in Him, and all too much trust in thyself; that art bold where thou shouldest tremble, and tremblest when thou shouldest be of good courage! Were it not for the good Shepherd, what would become of the sheep? Wayward themselves, how soon would they fall a prey to ravening wolves! Daily, hourly, and momentarily do we owe again to Jesus the life which He at first restored to us. Yet guided by Him—often unwittingly, oftener unwillingly, but always graciously—are we kept from falling, and led onward 'from strength to strength,' 'from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,' till 'every one in Zion appeareth before God.'

All this is granted unto us, not for the sake of our own righteousness, but in free grace 'for His name's sake.' Not my prayers, nor my vows, nor my endeavours, but His covenant faithfulness is the ground of my preservation. In times past He has so revealed Himself, and He is 'the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.' What He is, is surety to me for good. What He *has* done is pledge of what He will do.

He cannot lie. He will not change. And what evidence have we of this, who have not only all the records of His dealings with the Old but with the New Testament Church before us, and who have ourselves experienced His goodness and truth. And what plea is this to urge with our God in prayer, 'that our God would count' us 'worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified' in us, and we 'in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.'

1. What a precious and comprehensive title is that of Shepherd as given to Christ! In that name we read alike His love and our safety. And this conveys to us the provision of all we needed. Poor, weak, and straying, He gives us all, He supports us in all, and He guides us to all good. Verily we shall not want, we do not want, and we can never want any good thing while He is our Shepherd. Look upwards: we cannot want righteousness when He shed His precious blood for us. Look outwards: we cannot want provision when He gives Himself to us. Look forwards: we cannot want help when He is by our side. Look inwards: we cannot want comfort when He leaves His peace with us. But am I one of His sheep? Do I commit myself *wholly* to His guidance? Alas, how often do I wander from Him, and with how many sorrows do I pierce myself! Let me seek grace to covet this above all, to be entirely His. Not to seek mine own but His, to be prepared to follow Him; neither lagging behind, nor hastening before; and to depend for all upon Him alone, are the characteristics of those who know

Him and hear His voice. Yet, Lord, when I do not know or recognise Thee, know Thou me, bring me to Thyself, and ever keep me there.

2. I must first seek Jesus, and mainly seek Jesus, so shall I find peace—both rest and quickening. To seek first peace, and then Christ, is to miss the way. Yet, when we look for some qualification or preparation before going to Christ, are we not guilty of this error? The cross is our qualification, and Himself our quickening. Other qualifications we neither have nor can obtain. If this day I feel burdened under a sense of sin, or faint under a sense of weakness, let me humble but not distress myself, and go anew to Him. ‘He giveth more grace.’

3. And all this provision, now and hereafter, *‘for His Name’s sake!’* Free grace dispenses to us the riches of Christ. Most kindly does He provide for us, taking notice of our weariness and faintness. What will it be hereafter, when ‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him?’ Truly, may the bride say, in grateful love: ‘This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!’

My God’s my Shepherd ! I’ll not care
For any breath of moved air ;
The winds may blow, the storm may roar,—
Jehovah will preserve His store.

BARCLAY.

XXXV.

THE KING OUR HOST.

- 4 YEA, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, 'I will fear no evil :

For thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

- 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies : thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over.

- 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life ; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.—PSALM XXIII.

ANOTHER scene now presents itself. Or rather only another aspect of the same case, for still is our want the same, and our supply is in Christ. No longer merely weariness and faintness, but danger in its extreme form is to be met and removed. The figure of the shepherd resolves itself into the reality of constant, all-sufficient, and all-efficient supply. Not only in good and tranquil, but in evil times, when the green pastures are exchanged for the dark valley, He proves His care for us. There is just enough of the pastoral left to tell us that He is the same, and that what helped us in days of peace will prove equally sufficient in seasons of adversity. Thus are we still His sheep. The pastoral 'rod' of Jesus is still there, and it becomes to us the 'staff' on which we lean. '*Thy rod and Thy staff*'—Thy guidance and

Thy support, Thyself our guide and our support, and now more than ever in close fellowship with Thee—'comfort' us. Even here we have more than deliverance; we have peace and joy in believing. O enemy, thou hast done thine utmost, but thou canst not desolate us so long as Christ is with us. O darkness, however dense, cold, and dreary; O death, however bitter; O world, and its powers, however strong—behold your conqueror, the risen Saviour!

The holy confidence which the believer expresses, under a sense of Christ's sufficiency, is not trust in his own feelings. The experience, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley, the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,' is immediately followed by this explanation: 'for *Thou* art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.' Thus it is not a boast in our own but in His constancy; a fearlessness in view of the most dreaded evils, because of His presence and support. It is the praise of Jesus, not of faith, which is sung. Such boasting not man nor devil shall take from us—'that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.' On this point we must indeed be very watchful. For it is quite possible to commit the folly of trusting, if not in our unrenewed, in our renewed heart. Faith itself is ever an empty casket, valuable only in so far as it holds Christ. And our experience, even though triumphant, is but *present* experience, and as such extends not into the future, so that the 'I *will* not fear' is the expression of holy resolution, in view of Christ's sufficiency. This conviction is cherished, notwithstanding circumstances which, to the outward eye, might seem to betoken desertion on the part of God. 'Yea, though'

we walk through the dark valley—and it is *very* dark,—we fear ‘no evil,’ neither moral evil nor outward destruction (the word in its etymology designating the latter). Those only who are not His sheep need fear in the hour of bitter trial. The reason alike of our safety and comfort is His presence, concerning which Luther aptly remarks, that ‘it is not to be comprehended by our five senses, but *faith* perceives it, and holds it certain and sure that the Lord is nearer to us than we are to ourselves.’ And as to our conduct under such circumstances, ‘David here prescribes to all Christians a common rule, that there is no other means nor advice upon earth, to get rid of all manner of temptation, than that a man cast his burden upon the Lord, take hold of Him by the word of His grace, keep firmly to it, and allow it not to be taken from him in any way. He that does so may be content, whether it fare well or ill with him, whether he live or die, and will at last be able to stand, and must succeed as against all devils, world, and evil.’

Such trials will certainly overtake us. Dangers, anguish, and death are the common lot of humanity. Nor does our relationship to Christ set us free from them. It upholds and gives us joyous victory in them. And that is sufficient. Even God’s people are prone to burden themselves by looking into the future. Some, if they have not fear of anything else, are almost ‘all their lifetime subject to bondage,’ ‘through fear of death.’ One has aptly said that Christians may fear dying, but they cannot fear death. There is physical weakness here, and spiritual weakness. The one the Lord wonderfully supports, from the other He graciously

delivers. We may hold this as settled in reference to His people, that the Lord gives dying grace on the dying day—then, but not before. In some instances, the sun may have gone down, as it seemed to onlookers, amidst clouds. Yet may there have been at last, and behind these clouds, all the greater brightness. These two practical advices we should gather: Dismiss all thoughts of the future, or at least do not dissociate them from Christ. Again, cultivate simplicity of faith. Such comfort springs not from within, from your faith, but from without—from Christ. Measure not your hopes by your feelings, but by His merits and by His grace. And if you cannot speak in the order in which David here sets it forth, try to reverse it. Say first, ‘Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me,’ and then you will be better able to add, ‘I will not fear evil.’ Yet remember that we must have *present* comfort in His rod and staff, if we are to fear no evil for the future.

But the benefits which believers receive from Christ are not merely of a *negative* character. Great as the relief is, implied in rest to the weary, quickening to the faint, and support in all danger, God has provided even ‘better things for us.’ Accordingly, the figure is now changed, and He who was our Shepherd is presented as our *Host*. In the feast which He spreads before us (ver. 5) nothing is wanting. Himself prepares the ‘table’ and the meat (the expression here used denoting a board on which food is served). And it is ‘food convenient’ for us, exactly suited to our case and our wants. The cup which He filleth with the new wine of the kingdom is full to overflowing. God ‘giveth to all men liberally, and

upbraideth not.' Not the world's meat and drink, but Christ's. 'My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.' And that nothing may be wanting to the picture, He anoints His guests with 'the oil of gladness.' All strength, refreshment, and joy does He provide. Such is the supply which sovereign grace has made, such is the welcome which greets poor, guilty, needy sinners. Well may we be lost in wonder at such a reception. How differently did we deserve, and perhaps how differently did we expect! Each vessel shall be filled according to its capacity, but each vessel shall be filled. And thus does He daily renew the miracle of Cana in Galilee, by changing the water into wine. For these blessings are not reserved till we reach the heavenly city, though there they are perfectly and unbrokenly enjoyed. Even here and 'in the presence of mine enemies' are they granted. These cannot interrupt our fellowship with God, nor our enjoyment in Him and from Him. Our feast is provided, altogether independently of anything outward. Nay, these enemies must look on; they are restrained and constrained. And all the more glorious appears the grace of God which triumphs over all such hindrances. Thus our quiet resting-places are made the scenes of spiritual feasting and gladness. How often have God's people been made to experience this, and especially in face of their enemies. While they threatened and raged, the soul had not only much calm in God, but much communion with Him and great delight. 'With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace.'

Such being the believing anticipations, and such the expe-

riences of the soul, the Psalm returns at its close (ver. 6) to the keynote struck in ver. 1. What at the outset was subject of conviction, a believing prospect, is now, on a review of the whole, a record of confirmatory experience, or a believing retrospect. Nor does he merely refer to the past. He looks forward, and this time his horizon is unbounded. He enters not into particulars. Sufficient, that He shall 'dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever.' 'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' The expressions in which he describes his review of God's dealings are very peculiar, indeed unique: 'Only good and mercy' (or grace) 'shall persecute me all the days of my life.' In contrast to the *evil* to be feared in 'the valley of the shadow of death,' he meets '*only good*.' And this 'good' is ministered and accompanied by '*grace*.' In opposition to the persecution of his enemies, he finds that in reality all the time 'only good and grace' have *persecuted* him in the guise and often by the instrumentality of enemies. Thus 'all things work together for good.' All persecutions are at last found to be really those of 'only good and grace.' This is the true commentary upon and interpretation of God's dealings and of our lives. Whenever we suffer or fear let us remember this verse, and by seeking grace seek to share in its consolations. For so shall we be lifted far above all our enemies. 'And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round

about me : therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy ; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto Jehovah.' And this is but the beginning. Beyond this fleeting day, an everlasting day ; beyond this tabernacle, a house ; beyond this faith, sight ; beyond this prayer, praise !

1. Once more, O my soul, consider what the Lord has done for thee. This wondrous provision is only equalled by the manner in which it was procured. It is ever the mystery of mysteries, how He who was 'in the form of God,' and 'thought it not robbery to be equal with God,' 'made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant.' Other and better will I not seek than to have Him for my Shepherd. But let me be all the more earnestly concerned to know Him whom to know *is* life eternal. 'I shall not want,' and if so, I need not be careful, and I may not be fearful. Nor let me narrow His promise in any way. It is as comprehensive as the assurance : 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.' And this is repeated in the *same form* at least four times in the Gospels. Let me *strongly* believe this, put my finger upon it in seasons of doubt and darkness, and plead His own word. Nor is such a result, great as it is, at all incommensurate with its procuring cause. For, consider on the one hand what the blood of Jesus Christ speaketh ; and think also of the depth of love which the sacrifice of Christ implies. Thus, to Thee would I commit my spirit, O Lord God, who hast redeemed it.

2. I know not which is more marvellous, the fulness or the

unexpectedness of the provision which grace has made. All our wants are fully met, and nothing is left uncared for. But there is this peculiarity about it, that though we know it we ever seem to come *unexpectedly* upon it. While passing through some dark valley we scarcely realize that, when issuing from its gloom, we shall find a table spread for us, in face of our enemies. It seems so difficult to see a way out of all our troubles, that we are glad to be driven to what after all is the right state of mind, to give up thinking and caring, and to resign ourselves implicitly to Him. And yet it is so easy for Him to open up ways, that when He has done so we stand in grateful astonishment. Let me look upon my own brief and chequered history. Has it not been so even in my experience, and would it not be the height of folly and ingratitude to doubt for the future? And here I learn this lesson: to be mainly concerned for *one* thing, that I have part and lot in spiritual blessings, all that is needful being assured to me in Christ. Yet let me not pursue the odious policy of trying to make the best of both worlds. It needs *both* hands to grasp the cross. Here is true wisdom: '*one thing* have I desired of Jehovah; that will I seek after.' A child of God may have the Martha-spirit; but that spirit is ever rebuked. And so let me go on my way, rejoicing in the Lord, this day, and evermore.

3. In view of death and eternity, let me not cherish an unbelieving spirit. Many of God's dear children dread the entrance into that dark valley. Why think of it; or, if we think of it, why not straightway associate it with the comfort of His rod and staff? 'Precious in the sight of Jehovah is

the death of His saints.' He will assuredly provide here also. 'He knoweth our frame ; He remembereth that we are dust.' Can you not believe, and so dismiss this anxious care ? If you have trusted Him with the salvation of your soul, can you not leave in His hands the time and manner in which He shall call you unto Himself ? To every anxious care reply : 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want ;' and far more than you expect will He give who saith of each of His people : 'He *keepeth all his bones* : not one of them is broken.'

GIVE me my scallop-shell of quiet,
My staff of faith to walk upon,
My scrip of ioye (immortal diet !)
My bottle of saluation,
My gown of glory, hope's true gage ;
And thus I take my pilgrimage.

Blood must be my body's balmer,
While my soul, like peaceful palmer,
Travelleth towards the land of heauen ;
Other balm will not be giuen
Over the silver mountainis,
Where spring the nectar-fountains,
There will I kiss
The bowl of bliss.
And drink mine everlasting fill
Upon euery milken hill ;
My soul will be adry before,
But after that will thirst no more.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

XXXVI.

‘TALITHA CUMI!’

- 1 THE earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein :
- 2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.
- 3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place?
- 4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

PSALM XXIV.

THIS is a Psalm of the advent of Christ, most aptly following that in which the believer had extolled His felt benefits. Its subject is the glory of the Lord, and His claim upon universal and devout recognition. The ‘Shepherd’ of Israel, the Host of His people, is also ‘the King of Glory,’ ‘Jehovah of hosts,’ ‘Jehovah strong and mighty,’ ‘Jehovah mighty in battle.’ What therefore He is to us, He ought to be to all. Again, and in connexion with it, the question: ‘Who are His true subjects?’ is answered, ‘Verily they are not all Israel who are of Israel.’ The ‘Israel of God,’ the true seed of Jacob, are they who, washed in His precious blood, and renewed by His Holy Spirit, for ever ‘stand in His holy place.’ Their desires and aims correspond to their character and profession (ver. 6). And far and wide proclaim they—nay, proclaim all—the advent of this heavenly King, calling upon ‘the ever-

lasting doors’ to be flung wide open for the welcome and reception of their King.

It has been suggested that this Psalm was composed on the transference of the ark of the covenant to Mount Zion, and that most significantly it determined the spiritual principles of the kingdom of Jehovah,—as if at the initiation of the gorgeous Temple ritual, a warning against its carnal misapprehension were to be uttered. But ancient interpreters have rightly applied it to the advent of the Lord. It referred to the proclamation of His *first* coming, and may be regarded as the song of which the preaching of John was the application. And truly, if we consider what this event was both to Israel and to the whole world, the expressions seem only all too feeble to convey its import. Nor is it without deep significance that creation is made the preface to redemption, not only from their internal connexion, but as showing the infinite condescension of Him who has entered Zion as its King. Again, it may be regarded as a call really addressed to our hearts, which are destined to be ‘temples of the Holy Ghost,’ to receive their Lord and King, and in that sense the imperative necessity of holiness in the first part corresponds with the invitation to welcome Him in the second. Lastly, it may have formed not only a song of angels in that starlit night on the plains of Bethlehem, but also their welcome and that of the Church on His resurrection and ascension into heaven—as it is the cry of the Church in all ages, alike expressed in prayer, hope, joy, and deed, ‘Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.’ Thus is it a true *Advent Psalm*.

It is a very significant coincidence that this Psalm was

sung in the Temple service on the *first* day of the week, or the Lord's day. On Monday, Psalm xlvi. ; on Tuesday, Psalm lxxxii. ; on Wednesday, Psalm xciv. ; on Thursday, Psalm lxxx. ; on Friday, Psalm xciii. ; on Saturday (or the Jewish Sabbath), Psalm xcii., and on the Lord's day our Psalm was sung while the priests in their daily ministrations poured out the drink-offering unto the Lord. And so still, as we pour forth our drink-offerings, do we gratefully sing, and believingly and hopefully pray this Psalm of His advent.

Wide and deep lays He the foundation on which the kingdom of God is to be reared. 'The earth is Jehovah's and the fulness thereof; the world' (literally, 'the fruit-bearing world') 'and they that dwell therein.' Look abroad—all this great and mighty world, all its riches and beauty, all its fruitfulness and people, are the property and dominion of our covenant God. Though now in rebellion against Him, the world is none the less His, alike by creation and redemption. Not Israel only, not even the Church alone, but *all* belongeth unto Him. And this conveys the pledge of its final subjection to His sway. When Jesus rose from the grave, when that Almighty hand rolled away the stone from the tomb, as He stood forth in the morning air on that soil Himself had consecrated, all creation greeted Him as its Lord. Two angels left He in the empty tomb to guard the bands of death in which He had been wrapped; angels which still guard the cerements of those who sleep in Jesus. But the stone has been rolled away; the tomb is empty of its prey ('not dead, but sleepeth'); and angels guard the precious dust till the resurrection morning—for the earth is Jehovah's and

the fulness thereof ; and forth from their graves come they who have been intrusted to earth's keeping, when she giveth up her treasures to Him who rightfully owns them.

Let our vision range wide over the inhabited world. These teeming multitudes are Christ's. When we preach the gospel, we proclaim 'liberty to the captives' by publishing a fact which alike constitutes the glory and the happiness of nations. 'He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him !' One aptly records several applications of the first verse. Thus the apostle rests the doctrine of our Christian liberty upon it (1 Cor. x. 26). Call nothing common or unclean. It has the impress of the Lord's propriety upon it ; it belongs to Him, and may be used for Him. Another and yet higher liberty has also been founded upon it, when the Christian witness answered the threats of an emperor to silence him by banishment, by referring to this verse. For what matters it whether we are rich, or what are our apparent outward circumstances, since 'the earth is Jehovah's and the fulness thereof,' and this God is our Father in Christ ? And even a Jewish Rabbi has not missed its spirit, when he derived from it the duty of prayer at table, and declared that to partake of its blessings without giving thanks, was to be guilty of sacrilege ; for 'the earth is *Jehovah's* and the fulness thereof.' And, therefore, may we always pray for all things needful, and in accordance with His glory. How easy is it for Him to open His treasury, and to dispense to us out of its fulness ! Accordingly, regarding God as our treasurer, and receiving all as part of His property, we live upon Him day by day. And thus are we really happy.

Such a view of the world gives not only intense calm but intense joy. It was falsehood as well as blasphemy when Satan claimed all the kingdoms of this world as his own, in virtue of his desolation of the earth, and of his limited tenure in it. But God has *not* forsaken His earth. His purpose of love has been realized by the redemption of the world through Christ. Earth belongs as little to Satan as the dead belong to death. 'The earth is Jehovah's,' is the jubilant song of the *second* creation, by which the purposes of the first have been fully accomplished. And as at His first coming the angels, and at His resurrection the Church ; so at His second coming, shall earth itself, 'the world and they that dwell therein,' welcome Him with this song of acknowledgment and praise.

Irrespective of the internal accord which will be found to exist between the Biblical account of creation and the correct results of science (ver. 2), it is most comforting here to trace God's claim upon the world, *first*, to its creation and constant preservation : 'For He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.' The great Master-BUILDER, who has hung the earth upon nothing, has laid its foundations upon the seas. He has designed it for Himself, and given it to us to tenant, and to hold for Him. And as He has founded it most firmly, yet upon such unstable materials, so 'He establisheth' it in face of equal dangers. He has set a bound to the waters that they cannot overflow. And if He has not only originally founded, but by His constant Providence still preserveth it, can we doubt that He claims it as His own ? And so may we also comfort our-

selves, and from our own creation and preservation infer His purposes of love toward us. Yet all the more awful is the guilt of our apostasy, and all the more solemn the question of ver. 3 : ‘Who shall ascend into the mountain of Jehovah, and who shall stand in His holy place?’ A twofold meaning attaches to this. Though Jehovah be thus high and exalted, yet calleth He a chosen people into His ‘mountain,’ and causeth them to dwell in His presence. Again, since it is *His* mountain, and ‘His holy place,’ what manner of men ought they to be who hope to enjoy such fellowship! In reference to this, Luther rightly remarks : ‘To this question, all proud saints, and especially the Jews, answer unhesitatingly, We are this people. For, from the commencement of the world, there have been, and are still, and will continue to the end of time, two generations of those who ask after God. The first consists of those who did, and still do, serve God without heart, without grace, without understanding, and only by outward works, ordinances, sacrifices, and ceremonies. Just as Cain brought his offering, but withheld his heart and person.’ Of such empty professors, whose zeal and seeming devotion often seems to outrun those of God’s children, there are many in all ages and circumstances of the Church. Yet not to *judge* others, only to avoid their ‘evil communications,’ and to examine ourselves on this all-important matter, do we put this question. Remember that the verse conjoins the *ascending* into the mountain, with *dwelling* or abiding there, and that it furnishes the needful cautions by designating it as Jehovah’s mountain, and ‘His holy place.’ Thus we conclude with Luther : ‘Not he who

saith or sings so many Psalms, nor he who fasteth or watcheth for so many days ; nor he who preacheth to others, nor he who is gentle, upright, and kind ; in short, not he who understandeth all arts, languages, and has all virtues and good works which have ever been written or spoken about ; but he only who has this one qualification—that he is inwardly and outwardly clean.' Therefore we pray : ' Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.' ' Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me.'

1. The earth and its fulness belongeth unto Jehovah. This is enough, so far as our *reception* of all as from His hand is concerned, and our *dedication* of all as unto Him. What we enjoy, we have received ; what we have received, we bring and devote unto Him. We cannot want when such stores are laid up ; we possess all things, and yet we possess nothing ; for all belongeth unto Him. ' All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.' ' O Jehovah our God, all this store that we have prepared ' cometh of Thine hand, and is all Thine own. I know also, my God, that Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness.' Therefore, so far as dedicating our time, our talents, our means, and our influence is concerned, we only offer what is rightfully His. The evangelical part of our service consists in our recognition of this fact, and our loving, grateful, and joyous acquiescence in it. As for our enjoyments, we are like the priests who ate the shewbread which had been laid up before the Lord. As for our services, we ' offer willingly unto Thee.' ' The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that, if

One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.' And this truth let us ever seek to keep before our minds, lest we either claim righteousness, or become 'weary in well-doing.' As much and more than under the old dispensation we can lay our gifts upon the altar. Still more fully does all this apply to the dedication of our *hearts* unto the Lord. They *are* His, and we willingly give them to Him, 'whom having not seen' we love, 'in whom, though now' we 'see him not, yet believing,' we 'rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

2. We may safely commit the keeping of all unto the Lord as unto a faithful Creator. To Him we would intrust, not only the keeping of our souls, but of our bodies also, and of those whom we love. It was a beautiful saying of one of the Fathers that the Lord designedly said to the daughter of Jairus: '*Maid*, arise!' For had He simply said 'Arise!' forthwith all the dead would have sprung from their graves. So, as with one touch can He wake up earth and its fulness. Of this have we pledge (as has rightly been observed) in the three narratives of His raising the dead furnished in the Gospels, in which every age (the maid, the youth at Nain, and the man Lazarus) and every mode in which death can hold us, were represented: the maid on her deathbed, the youth on the bier, and Lazarus in his grave, as also every manner of application to Him. 'Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.' 'Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.'

3. O Lord, how often have I doubted and feared, instead of looking joyously out of myself, and considering all things as Thine !' And when Thou gavest me richly and undeservedly, how prone have I been to claim it as mine own, and to use it as mine own. Yet bitterness and disappointment have attended this. O teach me henceforth to devote all, by first giving myself up unto Thee ; and by Thy grace let me ascend into Thy mountain, and dwell in Thy holy place for ever !

THOU King of Light ! our deepest longing
Is shallow to Thy depths of grace ;
Deep are the woes to us belonging,
But deeper far Thy joy to bless.
Teach us to trust the Father's love,
Still looking to the Son above ;
Blest Spirit ! through our spirits pour
True prayers and praises evermore.

Jesus, Thine own with rich grace filling,
Thy mighty blessing on us shed,—
New life through every member thrilling,
Diffused from Thee, the living Head.
Show us how light Thy mild yoke is,
And how from self's hard yoke it frees.
If Thou wilt teach Thy household so,
The works the Master's hand shall show.

ZINZENDORF.

(*The Voice of Christian Life in Song.*)

XXXVII.

ADVENT HYMN.

- 4 HE that hath clean hands, and a pure heart ;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.
5 He shall receive the blessing from the Lord,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.
6 This is the generation of them that seek Him,
That seek Thy face, O Jacob. Selah.
7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors ;
And the King of glory shall come in.
8 Who is this King of glory ?
The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors ;
And the King of glory shall come in.
10 Who is this King of glory ? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.
Selah.—PSALM XXIV.

PERHAPS nothing else is so characteristic of our longing after fellowship with God here, and the enjoyment of His presence hereafter, as holy jealousy of ourselves. In measure as we appreciate these benefits, do we realize their spiritual bearing and our need of corresponding grace for their fruition. ‘Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God ;’ and in the nature of things, only they can ‘behold the King in His beauty.’ The Lord gives us not only adoption, but ‘the spirit of adoption,’ the family likeness with the family privi-

leges, and not only the name but the character of children. In this respect also, so far as our desires are concerned, we are created anew in the image of Him who created us. Not merely guilt and condemnation, but sin and alienation form the burden of our souls. Through grace, we would not, if we could, enter heaven in our state of nature. We have learned to dread, not the consequences of sin alone, but sin itself, and to long for being like unto Him in whose blessed presence we hope to stand. We want 'to be conformed to the image of His Son,' and 'transformed by the renewing' of our mind, that we may 'prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.'

Accordingly, ver. 4 really expresses our joyous confession and the desire of our hearts, not in the language of self-righteousness, far less of presumption. To the query, 'Who shall ascend into the mountain of Jehovah? and who shall stand' (in the sense of 'abide') 'in His holy place?' the believer unhesitatingly replies: 'He that hath clean' (innocent, guiltless) 'hands, and a pure heart' (the innocent of hands, the pure of heart); 'who hath not lifted up his soul to vanity' (or, borne his soul unto vanity), 'nor sworn to deceit.' And ver. 5 is added, both by way of caution against all self-righteousness, and to indicate how this evangelical righteousness is accomplished in us. It is scarcely necessary to say, that the above description includes alike our justification and sanctification. 'I will wash my hands in innocency: so will I compass Thine altar, O Jehovah.' Guiltlessness, or the removal of our sin, is combined with inward purity, the one preceding the other. And the notice of the two forms

of sin which 'more easily beset' us, is appropriately added. For to yield our souls to vanity, and to be actuated by motives of self-interest, are not only the characteristics of worldly men, but the temptations to which even believers are, in the present state of matters, constantly exposed. From these snares we are only delivered by cultivating that purity of heart which a constraining sense of Christ's love and continued fellowship with God preserve and increase. It cannot be too often repeated, that abstinence from the policy and the ways of the world is the result of that holy independence which flows from a sense of the sufficiency of Christ, and from joy in Him. Thus in life, heart, and purpose—but chiefly in heart—is there a wide difference between the world and the Church, and the effacing it either by want of assurance or of separation is the main cause of our weakness.

The promises of grace to those who walk in His ways are as numerous as they are necessary for our encouragement and comfort. Yet it should be noted that, from first to last, they are not as of right, but as of grace (ver. 5). These are the two main gifts which we covet,—His felt blessing and the gift of righteousness. Both are connected with the covenant of mercy in Christ Jesus, and come to us from the God of our 'salvation.' Washed in His precious blood, we walk in the sunlight of His countenance, and enjoy the bestowal of His righteousness. Purified within, we have calm and peace. Holy thoughts and feelings spring up within us, like flowers in spring-time. And with these our inward possessions, we are above reach of those privations which the world feels, and those temptations to which the world yields. Neither the

priestly blessing in Old Testament times, nor Levitical purity, could take the place of these higher realities. 'Jacob'—'the Israel of God'—was ever the generation of them that sought Him and His face (ver. 6). Outward privileges, however precious, cannot constitute us true members of the Church of Christ. It were altogether a misunderstanding to conceive that anything less than the blessing of God in Christ, and the possession of righteousness in every sense—both justification and sanctification—constitute the distinctive benefits which the Church enjoy. That is not a Church, and those are not members of it, who have not share and lot in this matter. And for the attainment of these blessings, no outward profession, no rite, ceremony, nor aught man can give or do, is sufficient. Such spiritual effects are connected with spiritual causes. Pardon (cleanness of hands), heart-renewal, separation from the ways and the aims of the world, and constant seeking after Him, even after the felt light of His countenance, are the characteristics of 'Jacob.' 'This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face—Jacob' (this is Jacob). 'They are not all Israel that are of Israel.' Therefore is the Church not any one visible community, but an invisible brotherhood, bound to Christ, and in Him to one another, by identity of faith, hope, and love. Very marked in this description of the Church are these three points. Believers are called a *generation*, properly an *age* or period (being derived from a verb signifying *to circle*), probably to mark their continuation from age to age. Again, the term 'Jacob' is paraphrased by 'they that seek Him,' to indicate their common and distinctive object. Lastly, it is shown how

believers cannot rest satisfied with less than the light of His countenance, and how this is enjoyed in fellowship with Him. O to find ourselves included in this description ; to feel that, however weakly and faintly, yet with all earnestness and sincerity of heart, we seek after Jehovah, the God of Israel !

Such is the people ; but who is their King ? We have seen Him as the wondrous architect of this world, who hath laid its beams upon the waters, and set a wall round about it against the overflowing flood. We have ‘admired’ Him in His saints, whom He hath called, purified, sanctified, and glorified. But Himself is higher far than all His works. Creation and redemption have been summoned to marshal their wonders. Creation and the Church are now summoned to welcome their Lord. The distinction between Jew and Gentile has been swallowed up in the higher unity which constitutes ‘the Israel of God.’ Wide fling open ye gates, ye everlasting doors own the presence of the King ! He comes as King of glory ; by your homage own the glory due unto His name. Angels’ trumpets sound His march ; angels’ voices proclaim His praise. Earth, thy Builder, world, thy Preserver comes—praise Him ! Church, thy Redeemer, thy Bridegroom, Lord, and Saviour comes—praise Him ! Gates, which His hand has reared—gates of earth, gates of heaven, lift up your heads ; look up, see your God ! Let the chorus rise and swell, animate and inanimate things, all that His hand hath framed, own His power and dominion. And ye doors which He has hung on His temple, ye everlasting doors, be ye lift up, that the music from within may mingle with the music from without, and earth

and heaven, Creation and the Church, in accord burst forth into an advent hymn. Christ the Saviour has come ; Christ the Saviour does come ; Christ the Saviour shall come ! Whatever has being, and in measure as it can, let it own the Lord. Hosanna to the Son of David ! Blessed be He who cometh in the name of the Lord. Behold Him, ' the King of glory,' and lowly worship. And how shall we know Him, who is the King of glory ? We know Him by His strength and might, we know Him by His victories. We know Him because He has burst the prison-gates, and broken asunder the bars of iron ; we know Him because He has led captivity captive ; we know Him because He has vanquished all enemies. We know Him by His scars ; we know Him by His wounds ; we know Him by His crown of thorns ; we know Him by His resurrection glory ; we know Him by His many crowns of victory. We know Him as the Lamb slain ; we know Him as the lion of the tribe of Judah. We know Him by the breastplate upon His heart ; we know Him by the key of David. We know Him by His love ; we know Him by His grace. Wave your palms, ye martyr-saints ; raise thy song, thou virgin Church. Own Him, earth ; proclaim Him, heaven ! Now ' King of glory,' He returneth, who lowly bending had drunk of the brook by the way. Lord of earth, and Lord of Heaven, King of saints, and King of the heavenly hosts—we own Thee, we worship Thee, we praise Thee ; we fling wide open the gates of our hearts ; we welcome Thee, we entreat Thee—so come and reign. Yea, come quickly. Amen !

1. With warm and deep affection let us dwell upon that

blessed truth of His coming. It is not a barren speculation, but a glorious reality, which forms alike the hope of the Church and of earth itself. Till then we must expect disorder and confusion. Yet bringeth He order out of it all, and causeth all things to co-operate for His glory and our good. 'Overturn, overturn, overturn, until He come, whose it is.' And every proclamation of the gospel, every progress of His kingdom, is a call to the gates and everlasting doors to be lift up for the reception of the King of glory. What a title this : King of glory! And how wondrous that we should contribute to constitute that title! For the Church is designated 'the glory of Christ.' Who would resist this proclamation, or not take up the gladsome message? This day, Lord, enable me first to obey, and then to re-echo the language of ver. 7.

2. Better than ever do we understand, in view of that day, that holiness becometh the people of the Lord. Surely Zion's King must have such subjects. The glory of Christ appears in His strength, in His might, and in His victories. These are manifested upon earth. They *have been* displayed in what He has done; they *are* displayed in what He still doeth in our hearts and in the world. The heavenly glory of Christ appears in His command of those unnumbered hosts; but His glory as Jesus consisteth in that 'He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.' This refers notably to the fact, that in reference to His people, 'He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.' It also refers to the fact of the disposition of His providence and the administration of His kingdom in accordance with the purposes of the covenant of grace. And thus holiness, safety, and glory are linked together.

3. O Lord, once more I pray: 'Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.' When I consider that great day of Thy coming, my heart would sink within me and despond, were it not for Thy grace. But we know Thee, as full of grace and of truth—for thou art the King of glory. Yet Lord, once more seal upon my heart a sweet sense of pardon, and grant me to feel Thy presence and Thy power. Lord, I would seek Thee; I would seek Thy face; 'hide not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away in anger. Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.' In that day let me be found at Thy right hand; nay, this day also help me to give myself unto Thee, and to live for Thy glory, Thou King of glory. This is truly to live: to glorify God—and if so, then surely, however humble my sphere may be, I may glorify Him—remembering concerning this, as all other gifts laid upon His altar, 'For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.'

And still, gracious Saviour, abundantly pardon and mercifully help Thy servants, who trust in Thee!

THEN come, oh come, Thou perfect King,
Of boundless glory, boundless spring;
Arise, and fullest daylight bring,
Jesus expected long!

From God's right hand, Thy rightful throne,
Return, Beloved, to Thine own;
Thy victory has long been won,
Oh, claim Thy conquest now.

S. BERNARD.

(The Voice of Christian Life in Song.)

XXXVIII.

THE CHRISTIAN WAY-SONG.

- 1 IN thee, O Lord, do I put my trust !
Let me never be ashamed : deliver me in thy righteousness.
- 2 Bow down thine ear to me ; deliver me speedily :
Be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.
- 3 For thou art my rock and my fortress ;
Therefore for thy name's sake lead me and guide me.
- 4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me ; for thou art my
strength.
- 5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit : thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God
of truth.—PSALM XXXI.

THESE verses mark, perhaps more comprehensively than any other similar passage, the covenant relationship of the believer to his God. Not only good hope through grace, but safety from all danger, calm and peace in the surrender of our spirit to God, and the assurance of our redemption, are here expressed in the language of filial prayer. A precious life-song for our faith, a sweet night-song for death, it opens (ver. 1) with a conviction which at its close (ver. 5) is shown to have been amply warranted. It almost seems as if on reading it we felt ourselves 'compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses.' How many of God's dear children have comforted themselves with these words, during

their 'great fight of afflictions;' how many have in its language breathed forth their prayers and their hopes; how many have experienced the reality and truth of its consolations! Above all, to how many have the words of ver. 5 proved not only their last prayer, but their joyous farewell to earth when they laid themselves down to rest in Christ. Now, world and time, enemies and death, do your worst: we are beyond your reach. 'Into Thine hand I commit my spirit; Thou *hast* redeemed me, Jehovah, God of truth.' Many holy men of old have died with these words on their lips. Polycarp and John Huss thus comforted themselves on their way to the stake. Luther and Melancthon repeated them on their deathbeds. 'Blessed,' saith Luther, 'are they who die not only *for* the Lord, as the martyrs, nor only *in* the Lord, as all believers, but also *with* the Lord, as they who expire with this saying.' And yet better than all, we remember that this formed the last utterance of our blessed Lord Himself upon the cross (Luke xxiii. 46). As one has said: 'David committed his spirit unto God, in order not to die; the other David, that dying He might not die.' Once more then, is it believing fellowship with Christ which makes this Psalm, which is typical of Him, so precious to His people. He hath trod this path, and we follow Him; and because in all its fulness it was true of Him, in all its richness it applies to us.

The Psalm opens with an assertion of confidence: 'In Thee, Jehovah, have I trusted' (literally, fled for refuge). Therefore is it *Jehovah*, God in Christ, and not my faith nor feelings which are my comfort. Anticipation of acknowledg-

ment on His part is only to give glory to Him as 'the God of truth.' Yet is this also couched in the language of prayer, remembering that it is of grace, and that our faith might readily fail. 'Let me not be put to shame for ever; deliver me in Thy righteousness.' Both hold true: it is impossible that God's people can be put to *everlasting* shame; and they will *never* be ashamed. The former (which is the lot of the wicked) could only take place if our hope perished. The latter also is insured to us in the promise of continuous grace. Our deliverance is in the 'Righteousness' of our God. For it is righteous that the deliverance purchased by Christ for His people should be applied to them; it is righteous in Him to fulfil His promises in which He has caused us to trust; 'it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us.' And let us also mark in this prayer the holy progress in confidence. It is a great thing unhesitatingly to say, 'In Thee, O Jehovah, have I put my trust;' to grasp that outstretched hand, and to take our firm stand upon that foundation. But to go beyond this, and to expect not only present but *constant* deliverance,—'let me *never* be ashamed,'—is a very decided step in advance. Lastly, to look not merely for help, but for an *immediate* answer to our prayers,—deliver me *speedily*,—marks the holy earnestness of the true *Israel* of God. Such prayers our God always heareth. There is neither doubt nor 'may be' about them. We *know* in whom we have believed; we are 'well assured' that He who hath promised will also perform. We are not as uncertain, beating the air. *God is in Christ*, contains to us, with the

assurance of our salvation, the pledge of every promise. 'He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.' Assuredly, we can doubt only one of these two things—either *what* we ask, or *Him* of whom we ask. The latter is unbelief, springing from looking to ourselves, or else from not beholding *Him* as in Christ. The Lord heareth my prayer, not for what I am, but for what He is ; not because of my faith, but because of His infinite love in Christ, and of His covenant of grace (Heb. iv. 14-16). To be uncertain as to *what* we ask is doubt, in the strictest sense, and as such is smitten with impotence. But let us bear in mind that all which we can connect with the glory of God ought at once to be removed from the category of doubt. 'Deliver me *in Thy righteousness.*' I would desire to have such filial 'trust' in Him, as to unburden all my heart unto Him. Though words should fail, sighs will speak ; and though I should stand 'behind' Him, still may I reach His feet with my tears. The distinction which is sometimes made between things spiritual and carnal, is itself too often carnal. Applied to prayer, it seems little better than the idea of the Syrians : 'Jehovah is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys.' Nothing is too great for Him to do, nor too small for Him to notice. Strange though it may appear, it is more pleasing to our unbelief to depend upon God for spiritual than for temporal things ; far easier to believe in answers to things unseen than to those that are seen. But let us take cognisance of our God. On the petition, 'Bow down to me,' one well remarks : 'This meaneth, O my God, Thou hearest so gently, as to perceive even my sighing ! Do not delay, I

entreat Thee. I have no outward protection, no fortress or defence ; be Thou my fort and my defence ! Here we learn how the children of God are wont to speak to their dear Father, as one friend to another, as a child to its parent : O dear Father, bow down Thine ear to me. Lo, this does faith, and so filial confidence encompasseth the Lord, and saith to Him : Thou alone knowest all my anguish, to Thee will I confide it, and as it were secretly whisper it into Thine ear. And the use of such anthropomorphisms in our religious *experience*, it has been truly observed, are as characteristic of living faith as that of bodily representations of religious *truths* is contrary to the spirit of such faith. To realize, as it were, the eye and the ear of the Lord, to feel His hand and to hear His voice, to long for His countenance, and to dwell in His house, is the language of personal converse with Him, suited to our present state.

The prayer : 'Be Thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me,' is immediately followed by the blessed conviction : 'for *Thou art* my rock and my fortress,' and by the gracious inference, '*therefore*, for Thy name's sake lead me and guide me.' The latter plea, both in its substance and terms, is known to us from Ps. xxiii. 2, 3. The connexion between the closing prayer of ver. 2, and the argument of ver. 3, marks the true logic of faith, which ever infers from our experience of His grace, the fresh bestowal of His mercy. As it were, Thou art my Saviour, therefore in Thine infinite compassion prove Thyself such, and save me. Still further do we mark that the plea and the petition are equally remarkable. I have neither hope nor help in myself,

nor in men, but *Thou hast* pledged Thy gracious word; '*Thou art* my rock and my fortress.' Thou canst not fail nor desert me. Therefore, wherein and where I do not see, 'lead;' and wherein and where I do see, 'guide me.' Thy hand and Thy voice, Thy power and Thy grace, are alike needed. More than human strength is requisite to 'pull me out of the net;' but then, '*Thou art* my strength.' What serenity when, by grace, I reach this altitude: 'Into Thine hand I commit my spirit!' Surely this is 'good hope through grace,' and 'strong consolation' for those who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them; 'for Thou hast redeemed me, O Jehovah, God of truth.' To commit my spirit, troubled like the lake of Galilee, to Him to speak peace to its swellings, because I am His own blood-bought property, 'redeemed, not with corruptible things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood' of the Lamb of God; to leave myself (body, soul, and spirit) in His hands, as my God and Father in Christ, *is peace*. It is this contentment of the soul in Christ and with Christ which constitutes peace. The expressions here used are also very peculiar and instructive. For the word rendered 'commit' means literally 'to cause to be separated,' and refers in its derivatives (as in Lev. vi. 2, 4; v. 21, 23, of the original), to what is intrusted for safe keeping. Again, the word rendered 'spirit' is not equivalent to that ordinarily translated 'soul.' The latter views 'the principle of life in men rather as an effect,' the former, 'as a cause.' Thus the believer gives over the inmost spring of his being to the safe keeping of his covenant-God, and intrusts it to Him as to the God of redemption (Ps. xxxviii.

16). And though this may perhaps more obviously occur to us in connexion with death, it refers even more pointedly to life. For in dying we shall make only the final and most needful application of what is the only true principle of living. But, whether living or dying, this spirit-surrender to God our Saviour is alike the spring of our strength and of our peace. Such peace 'passeth all understanding;' it not only goes far above and beyond it, but it goes another way. I understand not, I *rest*; I 'commit my spirit' into His pierced hands; I give up to Him all thought and care, for soul and body, for time and eternity, and that is peace. '*He* is our peace;' not merely our peace-maker, but Himself our peace; not in any figurative, but in the most literal sense of the terms. The more absolute, and hence the more simple our faith is, the fuller will our peace be. '*Thou hast* redeemed me,' I am Thy purchased possession; and again, *Thou art* 'Jehovah, God of truth.' He cannot change, He will not fail, and what He has said He will also do. We have 'two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie.' Nor is there in this holy confidence anything incompatible with the deepest humility. The very idea of prayer, the 'strong cries,' and the faith which exalts Christ and despairs of self, imply the most thorough self-abasement. '*Bow down* Thine ear to me' (ver. 2). But let us not confound unbelief, or the absence of intense expectancy, with humility. The former entertains low thoughts of Christ, the latter of self. But how rich and full are the covenant blessings vouchsafed to us in Christ; what ready access to Him, how certain the answers, how safe the way, how peaceful the journey, and how glorious

the end! 'O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!'

1. After reading and meditating on these five verses, let me diligently compare them with their New Testament explanation and application in Rom. v. 1-II. It begins with peace through Christ, and it ends with complete salvation by Him; and it embraces all that lies between these two terms. O my soul, Christ is all! Thy Saviour does all, has all, is all. None but Christ. Feed upon that bread of life; drink from that water of life; let it be a well-spring in thee, springing up unto eternal life. 'Out of *His* fulness have we all received, and grace for grace.' O for more of Christ—to know more of Him, to love Him better, to cleave more fully to Him! 'Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.'

2. 'In Thee, O Jehovah, do I put my trust.' Amen, Lord. 'Other refuge have I none; hangs my helpless soul on Thee.' However weakly and insufficiently, yet I *do* put my trust in Thee. I will not let Thee go. O Lord, Thou art my Saviour. I have no other trust, and I make Thee my trust. I believe in Thee as my Father in Christ; I cast my burden, I lean my weight on Thee. 'Let me *never* be ashamed.' Let sin and Satan never prevail against me. Let me never be put to flight. I am weak and wicked, foolish and wayward; Satan is cunning and mighty; the world is arrayed against me. 'My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.' 'Let me

never be ashamed,' come what may—the world, the devil, or sin. O Lord, however small I am, and just because I am so small, Thy truth is bound up in it and the glory of Thy grace. Hallelujah! Thou art my rock and my fortress, and a *strong* rock and a blessed house of defence to save me, body and soul, here and hereafter.

3. This one thing would I fain both learn and teach, as the lesson of my life and ministry, 'that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.' *Men*, as created by God, as fallen and ruined in Adam, and as salvable in Christ. *Always* to pray; not only in every state of soul, but under all circumstances, and at all times. *And not to faint*; either before they pray, while they pray, or after they have prayed. But for this and all other gracious motions, O reveal Thyself in Christ, and by Thy blessed Spirit work Thou in us this day, and for evermore.

O THOU, by long experience tried,
Near whom no grief can long abide;
My Love! how full of sweet content
I pass my years of banishment!

I hold by nothing here below;
Appoint my journey, and I go;
Though pierced by scorn, oppress'd by pride,
I feel Thee good—feel nought beside.

Ah, then, to His embrace repair;
My soul, thou art no stranger there;
There love divine shall be thy guard,
And peace and safety thy reward.

MADAME GUYON.
(*Cowper.*)

XXXIX.

MERCY TO THE MERCIFUL.

- 1 BLESSED is he that considereth the poor ; the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble.
- 2 The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive ; and he shall be blessed upon the earth : and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.
- 3 The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing : thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.
- 4 I said, Lord, be merciful unto me : heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.
- 5 Mine enemies speak evil of me ; when shall he die, and his name perish ?
- 6 And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity ; his heart gathereth iniquity to itself ; when he goeth abroad he telleth it.
- 7 All that hate me whisper together against me : against me do they devise my hurt.
- 8 An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him ; and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more.
- 9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.
- 10 But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them.
- 11 But this I know, that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.
- 12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.
- 13 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.—PSALM XLI.

DARK and sorrowful as the experience of this Psalm is, it has its blessed comfort, specially in its point of application to Christ. For every sorrow and suffering has its counterpart in the 'Man of Sorrows.' Never was desertion or ingratitude like that with which Jesus met, not only from His own to whom He came, and who received Him not, but especially from His 'familiar friend' 'which did eat' of His bread (ver. 9; comp. with John xiii. 18). All the more comforting is this reference to Jesus as connected with a case in which the believer suffers, apparently in great part, if not because, yet in connexion with Him, that we remark that the special complaint which he utters is not about any suffering consequent upon his guilt, but that his malicious enemies make use of his affliction for their own wicked purposes. Instead of sympathy and prayer, they mete out to him malice and condemnation, and that on the most selfish and hateful grounds. And this is ever the way of the world. They cannot understand judgment except in the sense of destruction, even as they know not God save as the Avenger. Hence, as all their thoughts of God are only those of dread, so all their thoughts of God's people are only those of bitterness. They maliciously magnify their sins, and delight in them. And too often the judgments of believers are almost equally harsh. Speak tenderly of a sinner; deal tenderly with a sinner, especially with a fallen brother, for God is able to lift him up, and He will lift him up. Deal not tenderly with sin, but deal tenderly with the sinner; for Christ hath dealt tenderly with thee, and He will deal tenderly with him also. His case may not be such as thou imaginest. Remember the

parable of the forgiven debtor ; remember the lesson of the Good Shepherd, who follows the straying sheep into the wilderness. Mourn and pray more than thou condemnest, and in this matter also seek the blessedness of him 'that considereth the poor.'

So far, indeed, as sorrow is the result of sin, we are not only willing to take it, but thankful to be 'chastened' of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. And this is the result of our evangelical repentance. Nor is our painful recollection of the past restricted to the immediate occasion of our suffering. Like Jacob of old, we go halting all our days. Accordingly, after having described in vers. 1-3 the general principles of the merciful administration of His kingdom, and before applying them to his own case, he maketh humble confession of his sin : 'I said, Jehovah, be merciful unto me ; heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee.' It may be so that His gracious promises apply to us ; yet while labouring under any sin, we dare not refer them to ourselves. The first point is to obtain pardon—the healing of our spiritual diseases. If this has been found, we may calmly await the issue of His dealings in Providence (vers. 10, 11). Our enemies, and especially our great enemy, ever misunderstand our case and our relation towards God. 'A thing of Belial' (a grievous sin) 'cleaveth to him' (is poured upon him like metal), 'and now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more.' Sin, or what we feel to be such, receives its worst interpretation, and it is supposed, or rather hoped, that all return to God is cut off, and that He has 'clean forgotten to be gracious.' Nothing is more characteristic of their malice than

such thoughts.' The enemy of our souls ever seeks to rob us of our hope by representing *our* case as hopeless. And here, perhaps more than in any other trouble, the example and encouragement of David's prayer comes home to our hearts. The more bitter their taunts and suggestions, the louder do we cry unto the Lord, acknowledging what in their charge is true, but entreating, as they that are ready to perish, restoration to His favour. 'But Thou, O Jehovah, be merciful unto me, and raise me up.' Our sin is aggravated; we feel its burden, in a manner far more heavy, though far different, than they conceive. But their inferences we reject. The tempter always first allures, and then accuses. But we believe in the living God. Prayer has never yet returned unheard; confession has never yet been set aside. However desperate our case, *there is* help for us in Christ; nay, He will not 'deliver' us 'unto the will' of our enemies. There is this peculiarity about faith, that it cannot and will not despond, either in reference to special guilt or to our case in general. Thus the history which opened so sadly with a picture of misery caused by sin, endeth with full assurance of pardon, spiritual preservation, and final beatification (ver. 12). All this to the glory and praise of sovereign grace (ver. 13).

The one great source of trouble and anguish removed, we can once more realize our relation to God as our Father in Christ. Nor can any rob us of our 'integrity.' Though we have forgotten and forsaken Him—and bitterly we mourn and lament our fall—yet is it not so, as they suggest. Conscience that, through grace, we have in our inmost hearts had

delight in mercy, having first experienced it ourselves, we anticipate still further displays of mercy. We have not fallen to rise up no more, as the wicked fall. Satan has sought to sift us as wheat is sifted, but *He* has prayed for us that our faith fail not. Therefore, like Peter, have we gone out to weep bitterly. The inmost tendency of our hearts, since grace reached us, has been different from that of the men of the world. We have joined ourselves, in heart and soul, to God's people. We have learned to 'consider the poor'—Christ's poor and suffering people. We have learned to make dedication of ourselves to Him, and of all we possess, to His service. More especially have we been turned from self-seeking, and delivered from the great sin of the men of this age, the love of the world, by having the love of the Father substituted in its stead. And here let us pause, as this matter deserveth and requireth, for our instruction, some special consideration.

Let us specially mark this. The selfish appropriation of what the Lord intends and intrusts to us for high purposes, enslaves the heart, engrosses the mind, captivates the imagination, and prevents holy thinking and holy acting. We must not be conformed to the 'proud' men who say, 'Our lips' (or our means) 'are our own ; who is lord over us ?' If we regard *anything* as our own, then surely *all* is still our own, and we are not His who bought us with His precious blood. Nor can we forget that there is a question more solemn and important than *our offering*—even *His accepting*. This by no means follows as a matter of course. What we give, must be offered in humble and contrite prayer, and is only accepted in the cove-

nant of grace through Jesus Christ (Isa. i. 11, 12 ; Amos v. 21, 22). The acceptance of our gifts (as we call them), or rather, of our offerings, like that of our prayers and of our persons, is an act of grace on the part of our reconciled Father. Hence the prayer, 'The Lord remember all thy offerings, and *accept thy burnt-sacrifice.*' Let us make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness ; above all, let us not be engrossed with the thought of accumulating riches. How different, how much more blessed, is a life of faith ! I would rather have the priest's portion than aught Egypt can supply ; I would rather feed upon the bread of consecration, which has first been laid before the Lord, than be supported by the richest institution of earth. But, blessed be His name, I can connect all my 'getting' with Him by receiving it from Him, by offering it to Him, and enjoying it in Him and for Him. In this case *He* is surety to us for good, who will take care not only of our outward estate, but of our body itself, and of our fair fame (vers. 2, 3). The body is more than meat, and a good name is better than riches. The Lord is surety not only for our provender, but for our life, health, and peace. Prayer is an excellent medicine in sickness, and a strong shield against slander (ver. 4). But mark how in this also all is connected with a continuous exercise of faith. The Canaanites are still left in the land ; only, they are not allowed to triumph over us (vers. 11, 12). I know that, of all outward troubles, evil-speaking is most difficult to bear. There is the hypocritical friend, who speaketh vanity and falsehood, his heart all the while gathering iniquity to itself, that he may pour it forth like a poisoned stream. Such

evils are most apt to befall us when we are otherwise in a low condition, either in body or outward estate. They talk to the confusion of those whom God has smitten. And what with the desertion of friends, the bitterness of enemies, and the depression of our own condition—not to speak of our inward sense of sin and ill desert—it almost seems as if we could rise no more (vers. 5-9). But now is the time for strong crying and tears. However deep the waters may seem to me, what are they compared with those that rolled over *His* soul? (ver. 9.) ‘And we indeed justly; but this man hath done nothing amiss.’ Therefore, let me now unburden my soul by confession—full and unreserved, and willingly submit both to blame and to the punishment of my sins. Then comes the time for pleading with God, for entreating Him, for seeking His undeserved mercy (vers. 10, 11); and for finally resting peacefully upon Him, with the Amen and Amen of the believing, satisfied heart (vers. 12, 13).

1. O this burdening of ourselves with needless, foolish, and sinful cares for the morrow! Lord, let me live upon Thee: for body and soul, for time and eternity, be Thou my Provider. Let me also meditate upon this subject of ‘being accepted’ in the light of the Word; let me study the Scriptures in connexion with it. Lastly, let me consider the poor, Thy poor. Their poverty Thou reckonest as if it were Thine, and Thou richly providest for them. Let me also ever be one of Thy poor ones.¹

2. In all my afflictions Thou wast afflicted. I cast them

¹ God sent Elijah to the widow of Sarepta, ‘not to beg of her, but to board with her, and He would pay well for his table.’—MATTHEW HENRY.

all upon Thee. The less I see, the more I will wait upon Thee. And, O Lord, what relief to be able and allowed to lay before Thee all the details of my suffering! It is not as to an earthly friend, from whom I would fain hide what I feel of sin, as causing the affliction, and therefore as specially poignant in the taunts and slanders of my foes. But I come unto Thee, O Lord, to whom I may confess all my sins, and in whom I may still trust, because I can entreat Thee through Jesus Christ, my Saviour.

3. Still trust in God, my soul. He will not, in His grace He cannot, leave thee. The storm has swept away what was untenable; it has driven me closer to Jesus, the Friend of sinners. And here I will *rest*, and rest for ever. Amen and Amen.

OH, how past all utterance happy,
Sweet, and joyful it will be
When they who, unseen, have loved Him,
Jesus face to face shall see!

In that day how good and pleasant
This poor world to have despised!
And how mournful and how bitter,
Dear that lost world to have prized!

Blessed, then, earth's patient mourners
Who for Christ have toil'd and died,—
Driven by the world's rough pressure
In those mansions to abide!

To those realms, just Judge, oh call me,
Deign to open that blest gate,
Thou whom seeking, looking, longing,
I with eager hope await!

HYMN OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY.
(*The Voice of Christian Life in Song.*)

XL.

PEACE, BE STILL!

- 1 As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee,
O God.
- 2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God! When shall I come and
appear before God?
- 3 My tears have been my meat day and night,
While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?
- 4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me :
For I had gone with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.
- 5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?
Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him
For the help of his countenance.
- 6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me :
Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Her-
monites,
From the hill Mizar.
- 7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts :
All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
- 8 Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime,
And in the night his song shall be with me,
And my prayer unto the God of my life.
- 9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
- 10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me;
While they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?
- 11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.—PSALM XLII.

WITH this Psalm commences the second book of the Psalter, among whose various characteristics the prevalence of the name *Elohim* has been specially noted. For while in the first book the name Jehovah occurs 272 times, and that of Elohim only fifteen times, in the second book (Ps. xlii.-lxxii.), the name Elohim occurs 164 times, and that of Jehovah only thirty times. This book is also introduced by at least seven Psalms (Ps. xlii. and xliv.-xlix.), which seem to be the composition of the sons of Korah, though in the spirit if not under the direction of David. The history of that family as traced in Holy Writ is touchingly interesting, from the judgment of their ancestor down to the enthusiastic espousing of the cause of God by his descendants, who gathered around David at Ziklag (1 Chron. xii. 6), and their employment in the song and the service of the sanctuary. The characteristic feature of their hymns is deep attachment to the house of the Lord, to His service, and especially to Zion's heavenly King. One feature in their spiritual history, as contrasted with that of their ancestor, we can scarcely refrain from mentioning, as being expressed in that deep and humble contentment with their office as door-keepers, on the ground mentioned in their Ps. lxxxiv. (ver. 6, 7): 'I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness, *for* Jehovah God is a sun and shield.'

Without seeking in this meditation to enter upon the meaning of each separate verse in this precious Psalm, we note that it describes the feelings of one who, deprived of the privileges of God's house, under the scorn of enemies, and amidst the sorrows of his own heart, longs for fellowship

with the Lord, and at last in answer to prayer obtains the full comfort of faith,—the light of God's countenance becoming the health of his own. The general scope of this Psalm may be given in a condensed abstract from Luther: 'There is a twofold view of God. At times He hideth and covereth Himself, as when the conscience, under temptation, feels sin or other evils, whether spiritual or temporal, and is unable to comfort itself with the grace and mercy of God. Those who judge according to this hidden image of God, fall, without help, into despair and condemnation. But there is another and an unveiled likeness of God, revealing and discovering Himself as the gracious, merciful, compassionate, and reconciled God. And although the conscience affright, all evil threaten, and we be almost cast down by doubt, yet we rise again by faith, cleave to hope, and comfort ourselves that God will help, and again restore us to His service in the place which He has alone ordained upon the earth. And concerning the absolute need of such services under the old dispensation, Calvin remarks that as the Old Testament saints had not wings wherewith to fly upwards, they made use of ladders by which to mount up to God, while we to whom Christ and His benefits have been granted, no longer require such aids to our weakness.

Although, in general, we should be extremely careful in applying the Psalms to special situations, we can scarcely be mistaken in referring this to the time when David fled before the face of Absalom, when the curse of Shimei expressed the feelings of the ungodly, and when the king, having pitched his camp on the other side Jordan, the lyre of Israel sent its

plaintive notes from the land of Hermon and the hill Mizar. The deep spiritual depression of the king, and his upward look of penitence, appeared sufficiently in his reply to Shimei. Yet never before had David so certainly marched to true victory as when, with his face covered, he passed over the mount of Olives. Most precious is it to realize our safety in extreme danger and desertion, and to mark here also the footprints of our blessed Saviour. The sense of desertion expressed in ver. 6, found its full meaning only in the agony of the garden (Matt. xxvi. 38 ; John xii. 27). And thus, as applying to Christ, it also applies to His people. The circumstances which called forth this complaint were only its temporary occasion. What gave its bitterness to the cup was the sense of God's desertion, which breathed life into the taunts of the enemies. That one who so much longed for nearness to God, and fellowship with Him, should be a helpless exile from His presence ; that over his soul such a storm should burst ; that as wave incessantly rolled upon wave, deep should call unto deep ; that all those waves and billows should have been His, constituted the deep problem of his anguish. Yet in this very fact also lay his consolation. For thus did faith, which laid hold upon that everlasting Arm, and prayer which rose from a heart longing, 'as the hart panteth after the water-brooks,' find 'in the day-time' His *grace*, 'and in the night His *song*.' And all this '*commanded*' by 'the God' of his 'life.' O how true of Christ ; O how true of Christians ! And thus the distress is made the occasion of the plea (ver. 9), and the complaint which is felt like 'killing' in his 'bones,' or innermost being, gives

place to calm confidence, to patience, to the rest of faith, and to the expectancy of hope (vers. 10, 11). And here do we see and learn how even, if our souls are oppressed under a sense of guilt—feeling *His* judgments, not those of men, to be righteous—we can attain to blessed peace. Thirsting after the living God, not a mere doctrinal abstraction, and scarce able to brook delay (ver. 2); feeding upon tears, as the query for the ‘where’ of our God finds its echo within (ver. 3); remembering the gladness of His presence all the more sadly under a sense of present desertion (ver. 4); our inward weakness and grief appearing in its twofold manifestation,—the soul being ‘bent down,’ or bending itself, as in agony, and ‘disquieted’ (the word indicating the *noise* of disquietude, as that of waves, in reference to which it is employed, for example in Ps. xlv. 4), the soul nevertheless by faith rises, and, as it were, commands itself to believe, remembering the promise of grace implied in the Aaronic blessing, to which pointed allusion is made in ver. 5. Thus just because the soul is cast down, it remembers Him in the place of its desertion; in the plains beyond Jordan, in sight of the majestic Hermon range, and ‘from the hill Mizar,’ or rather ‘the little hill,’ and thus finally through ‘hope in God’—the good hope through grace—is gladness restored; and the ‘*light* of His countenance’ becomes ‘the *health* of my countenance,’ because He is ‘my God.’

There is such intense tenderness and pathos in this Psalm as to render it peculiarly suitable to souls exercised under deep and sore trials. It almost seems as if, having experienced the anguish of God’s desertion, the soul had sounded the lowest depth of earthly affliction. Hence the prayers

and the consolations of this Psalm apply to all seasons of affliction. And here let us remember that the direct object, and the tendency of *all* sanctified affliction, whether loss of earthly goods, desertion of friends, bitterness of foes, or any other burden, is to cut us off from all resources, to cast us for help upon God, and to lead us to find our joy in Him alone. Let us distrust the character of *every* sorrow which does not bring us to our knees and shut the door behind us. Then our parched and wearied hearts pant for God, not so much from the loss of other objects, nor even from a fuller insight into their real character, as from a view of the beauty of the Lord in the face of His Anointed. Nothing less than converse with the 'living God,' the manifestation of Jehovah as our prayer-answering Father in Christ, will satisfy the craving of the heart. If we had attempted to shut up the fire in our hearts, it would have consumed us (ver. 3). Yet the real element of bitterness in such trials is, if in any way they shake our confidence in Him as a *present* God. '*Where is thy God ?*' So long as our minds are tortured with this harassing doubt, we are paralysed. We cannot arise to call upon our God, if we know not *where* He is. To this question, most assuredly, there is no answer by *sight*—at least in such signs as are sought by an evil and adulterous generation. The only possible answer is that of *faith* (given Ps. cxv. 3), which sets at rest all such questions, whether in reference to the word or the work of God. '*But our God is in the heavens ; He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased.*' Let me then remember these four facts : '*He hath done*' it ; '*He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased ;*' '*Our God . . . hath done whatsoever He hath pleased*'—the covenant-God ;

'But our God is in *the heavens*,' almightily overruling and restraining for His glory and our good. Under such circumstances, it is also well to enter into spiritual reasoning with our soul (ver. 5). *Why* am I cast down, and *why* am I disquieted? Is there good reason for it? Were my joy and strength derived from the creature? Rise, then, my soul; rise directly to God! What matters it *whence* I call upon God—Jerusalem or the land of Jordan? Heaven and help are equally near. Yet there is unspeakable relief in making known the greatness of our distress, and, above all, in recognising His hand as overruling it all (ver. 7). Affliction would be overwhelming indeed, if these were not 'all *Thy* waves and *Thy* billows,' both in the sense of allowing them to rise, of graciously overruling and of mightily restraining them. This may not always appear with the same clearness, but is our ultimate comfort in every affliction, even in that occasioned by our own folly and sin. Moreover, it is of the utmost importance to have a *definite object* in view in our prayers and expectation (ver. 8). God is glorified in the joyous expectancy of our faith, which anticipates not only preservation and support, but special deliverance and decisive victory, and that from Him alone (ver. 9). Therefore, and at all times, let me come back, as to a place of safe anchorage, to the question, the direction, the confidence, and the rest of God's people, as expressed in ver. 11.

1. It is in seasons of trouble that the question comes home to my heart, Do I really pant after God? Yet, let me put this question on my *knees*, in the way of confession and of entreaty. Surely, it is far better even to be driven in by the storm, if need be, than to be tempted to pass beyond the

gates of the City of Refuge. O Lord, this is a time for humbling myself, and for seeking Thee, and Thee only. Let me now return unto the Lord. Thou art my only joy, and my sole Deliverer.

2. There is peculiar sadness in the recollection of former enjoyments ; and there is a sense of peculiar helplessness, and of the insufficiency of all human resources, when He lays His hand upon us. What can I now do ? What is left to me ? So long as I look at these trials as caused by the more immediate instrumentality through which they were sent, all seems dark and hopeless. Now, my soul, learn two things : that men ought always to pray, and not to faint ; and again, that still—even when raised by the enemies of God and of my soul—there is a most important sense in which these are ‘ *Thy* water-spouts,’ ‘ *Thy* waves and *Thy* billows.’

3. Thou hast now gotten the victory, my soul. These are the Divine facts. It only remaineth to make application of them in the exercise of faith, and to draw down by prayer the actual blessing. Faith brings confidence and comfort,—prayer, help and deliverance. Look up, look forward ; expect it, draw it down. Most assuredly ‘ I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God.’

MANY a blow and biting sculpture
Polish'd well those stones elect,
In their places now compacted
By the heavenly Architect,
Who therewith hath will'd for ever
That His palace should be deck'd.

HYMN OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY.

(*Neale's Mediæval Hymns and Sequences.*)

XLI.

MESSIAH'S REIGN.

- 1 O CLAP your hands, all ye people ; shout unto God with the voice of triumph :
 - 2 For the Lord most high is terrible ; he is a great King over all the earth.
 - 3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.
 - 4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob, whom He loved. Selah.
 - 5 God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet !
 - 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises ; sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
 - 7 For God is the King of all the earth ; sing ye praises with understanding.
 - 8 God reigneth over the heathen : God sitteth upon the throne of His holiness.
 - 9 The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham ;
- For the shields of the earth belong unto God : he is greatly exalted.

PSALM XLVII.

THIS is another sweet hymn of the sons of Korah, celebrating the triumphs of Israel's King. For the Israel of God ever recognised only one King,—the Son of David. And each victory achieved by Israel's King, through whatever instrumentality and at whatever time, pointed forwards to that great victory achieved in 'the resurrection from the dead.' Here the true application of this Psalm is to the ascension of Christ, and to His consequent reign (Col. ii. 15 compared with Eph. iv.). Thus, when the Venerable Bede

breathed his last on the anniversary of Christ's ascension, he prayed : ' O King of glory, Lord of power, who this day hast triumphant gone up above all heavens ' (compare ver. 5). And Luther designates it, briefly but comprehensively, the ' Psalm of the Sons of Korah : Christ has ascended into heaven.'

Whatever victory may have been its immediate typical occasion, we note that the Psalm calls upon '*all nations*' to 'clap' their hands. Every triumph of God is in reality that of '*all nations*.' And the ultimate victory of Jehovah will result not merely in the subjection, but in the transformation of the Gentiles, who will hail their Conqueror as their King. Hence also His proclamation as 'Jehovah the most high and terrible,' and 'a great King over all the earth.' The manifestation of His royalty is twofold : the subdual of the nations, and the allotment of Israel's portion (vers. 3, 4). The people return to Zion, and Jehovah their leader, who had descended to give victory to His people, to His throne of glory, amid the acclamation and the praises of the saints (vers. 5, 6). Once more and louder than ever is the herald voice heard, this time of His actual reign among the heathen, and of His executing judgment in holiness (ver. 8, comp. Rev. xi. 15 to end). And now 'the princes of the people' are gathered around Him,¹ 'the shields of the earth,' along with His chosen people, one assemblage in heart and soul ; and Jehovah-Jesus, with His many crowns, upborne by saints' and angels' praises, stands forth, God's own beloved Son, the Saviour of the

¹ *Bakius* makes the following apt play upon the words :—'Magnates magnetes sunt, multos ad se attrahunt, vel recte credentes vel errantes etiam.'

Church ; He who manifested God and glorified God ; He who sought us and bought us—'greatly,' eternally, unspeakably 'exalted.'

Viewed in this light, this hymn of the sons of Korah is, in its fullest and truest sense, a song of Messiah's reign. As such, let us, for instruction and edification, mark the various elements which it embodies. Ransomed earth takes up the hymn of praise (vers. 1-4), and redeemed Israel answers 'with understanding' (vers. 5 to end). The sum and the reason of this joy is, that Jehovah is enthroned and acknowledged as 'the King of all the earth.' Oh, how one longs for the setting right of things! Amidst the apparent disorder—the prevalence of sin, of unbelief, idolatry, and ignorance—we turn to these songs of deliverance, to comfort and uphold during the long, dreary night-season. Yet, as the Spirit of God at first brooded over the waste, chaotic deep, so He is still present with and overshadowing the new creation. Over against the present state of seeming confusion and lawlessness, we write the blessed assurance, conveyed to faith (which is the *evidence* of things unseen), that 'Jehovah *is* a great King over all the earth' (ver. 2). In answer to the rebellious tumult of the nations, we repeat to ourselves the precious promises received by faith (which is the *substance* of things hoped for), of which this is a summary : 'He *shall* subdue the people under us' (ver. 3). What a change when He shall come, attended by His joyous and acknowledged saints, and welcomed by long-groaning earth ! (ver. 1.) But let us, who are His people, beware of unbelief. The lying message of the prince of this world, 'The Lord delayeth His coming,' tends to lull asleep

not only the foolish, but also the wise virgins. Granted that ours may be the decay, and not the absence of faith. Yet what grief, perplexity, and weakness are connected with such a state ! It needs close walking with the Lord, constantly and unweariedly, to look for the fulfilment of the promises, irrespective of passing events ; to anticipate them, and to live with our hearts in them. Thus our views and feelings with regard to the promises may serve as a test of our spirituality. And what consolation in the thought that He *loveth* this 'excellency of Jacob !' His delight is with the children of men. He that has been once offered up for sin shall come a second time, without sin, unto salvation. 'We would see Jesus'—'the King in His beauty.' And what applies to the world in general, holds true of our personal experience. All deliverances are interpositions of 'the King of saints ;' they always cause the shout of triumph—joy, confidence, thanksgiving ; and they are all typical and anticipatory of the *great* deliverance both of ourselves and of the world (2 Cor. v. 4, 5). Faith rests on two pillars—the character of God (ver. 2), and the promises of God (ver. 3). It is of the nature of faith that it makes special and personal application of the revelation which God has made of Himself in Christ Jesus (ver. 4). To what God *saith*, faith responds with an Amen ; on what God *is and doeth*, faith resteth. Faith is the personal application of the gospel. When the Holy Spirit saith that Jehovah is 'most high' and 'terrible,' 'King over all the earth,' and 'shall subdue the people under us,' faith responds by making personal application of this in the covenant of grace : 'He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom He loved.'

Oh, what an assurance is this ! How completely it meets our wants for the future ; how satisfactorily it answers our questions ; how fully it removes our doubts ! The reason of all this is evident. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is alike His victory and ours (ver. 5). He has 'led captivity captive,' and 'received gifts for men ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.' This is a subject for unceasing praise ; for this King is 'our King,' and the 'King of all the earth' (vers. 6, 7). Then, what joy, when, with princes and peoples, with the long-wandering prodigal, the elder brother will be brought in—'the people of the God of *Abraham*'—and thus the covenant, in all its fulness, established in the earth !

1. What are my feelings with reference to the coming of the Lord and to His promises generally ? Do I take a believing survey of the world—both in reference to the present and the future ? Too often have I looked on men and matters in a carnal manner, judging of results from what is seen and temporal. Let me consider men as in Christ or out of Christ, and all events as really, though not apparently, part of that great scheme of which the end is the enthronement of our Saviour-King. If these things be so, what manner of men ought we to be ! What should be the effect of these convictions on my heart *this day* ? Let me plead His promises, let me long for their fulfilment, let me earnestly labour in view of them. How must they pray and work who know that 'the Lord is at hand !'

2. I dread the want of practical application. Whatever the Lord has said I can and must *make my own*, by faith.

Faith looks wholly away from the creature, and up to God. I must do so in reference to Israel, in reference to the heathen, and in reference to my own soul. Wherever I have the Word, I have standing-ground. And how firm is that foundation of which Christ Himself is the chief corner-stone ! Rejoice, O my soul, in going out of thyself to Him. Triumph, for the Lord is King of all the earth. Lay hold on these promises, trust, and look up expectant. This day let me come with boldness, making known my requests. *He* is able and willing to save unto the uttermost who is exalted to the right hand of the Father, and to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth.

3. To 'sing praises *with understanding* !' Let me seek spiritual understanding—to penetrate beyond the seeming to the real, beyond the effect to the cause, beyond the event to the Lord ! I would seek to understand Thy Word, Thy ways, Thy promises—above all, the revelation of Thyself in the face of Jesus Christ, Thine Anointed. Lord, grant me understanding, day by day, and in all matters, that I may follow Thee—the heart-simplicity of a child, and the understanding of a child of Thine, taught of Thy Spirit, that I may praise Thee, who sittest upon the throne of Thy holiness.

THE Lord shall come in dead of night,
When all is stillness round ;
How happy they whose lamps are bright,
Who hail the trumpet's sound !
How blind and dead the earth appears,
How deep her slumbers are ;
Still dreaming that the day she fears
Is distant and afar !—*Hymnologia Christiana.*

Y

XLII.

THE BREAKING WAVES.

- 1 THE Lord reigneth ! He is clothed with majesty !
The Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself :
The world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.
- 2 Thy throne is established of old ; thou art from everlasting.
- 3 The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice ;
The floods lift up their waves.
- 4 The Lord on high is mightier than the voice of many waters,
Yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.
- 5 Thy testimonies are very sure : holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for
ever.—PSALM XCIII.

THIS is one of those magnificent Psalms which describe Jehovah's reign. Even Jewish interpreters say of them : 'these all treat of the things which will take place in the times of Messiah.' Throughout it reads like a commentary and application of the grand fundamental truth, 'Jehovah reigneth.' Already He hath laid the foundation of His kingdom in His Church, and anon shall He in His faithfulness and power establish it. Those elements which have hitherto resisted shall not be allowed to continue. Right royally He manifests Himself. 'He is clothed with majesty ; clothed is Jehovah, might hath He girt about Him.' The present state of things is connected with Christ's humiliation. But

when He puts on His royal mantle of majesty, and girds about Him the sword of His might: 'thus the world shall be established; it cannot be moved.' And yet, though seemingly the enemy has long prevailed, 'Thy throne is established of old; Thou art from everlasting.' The establishment of His throne is the ground and the pledge of the establishment of the world and of His kingdom. 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.' In view of all this, the Church stands a wondering spectator, first struck with awe, and then filled with adoring gratitude. 'The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah, they have lifted up their roaring; the floods are lifting up their dashing noise.' The latter term refers to the sound of the waves *as they break*, and in connexion with it the change of tense is very marked. The enemies of God and of His kingdom have risen like the floods or waves of the sea, lashed by the storm; with roaring noise have they advanced; but as they near the vessel which bears the King, their noise is that of waves dashing into foam. Their utmost nearness is—to their destruction; their utmost noise is—in breaking. And even now, and in the height of the storm also, far overtopping not only all danger, but even its threatening noise, is Jehovah. 'Jehovah on high' (even there) 'is mightier than the roaring of many waters and mighty, than the breaking waves of the sea' (the word here rendered 'breaking waves' being literally a *derivative* from the verb to break). What a picture this of our safety; what an epitome of the history of God's government and of His Church! Thus the calming of the storm on the lake of Galilee was not only a parabolic representation of

the history of the kingdom of God, but also typical of the final consummation of all things; a summary of the past, a prophecy of the future, a type of the end. And what applies to the Church as a whole, holds equally true of individual believers. Let us ever remember that the noise is that of the *breaking* wave. Our greatest dangers are only breaking waves; waves which break at His feet. The same expression is also sometimes applied to the waves of God's wrath or judgments threatening to engulf the believer, as in Ps. xlii. 7; lxxxviii. 7. These also, blessed be His Name, are only breaking waves. Meantime, while waiting for the manifestation of His majesty and might, have we 'the more sure word of prophecy.' 'Thy testimonies are very sure' (very reliable, literally very *Amen*-ed); and, so far as we are concerned, our faith and patience are tried and proved: 'Holiness becometh Thine house, O Jehovah, for ever.'

Thus we have here the history of the Church of God deduced from the text, 'Jehovah reigneth.' These words are to us also as 'a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts.' So long as they are left us, all that threatens us from without is only like the noise of the breaking wave. The unspeakable comfort conveyed in this assurance is ever tested in the experience of God's people.

There is no truth more precious to the heart of the Christian than that 'the Lord reigneth.' The conviction of this must carry us far above all cares and fears. A personal God, a living God, a reigning God—alike in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth—and this God the

Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,—such are the steps by which we reach a height, where, far removed from the turmoil of men, we gain a comprehensive and clear view of earth and its concerns. I would not exchange the assurance which these two words, ‘Jehovah reigneth,’ convey, for all the wisdom, combined with all the power, of this world. Received into my heart, they are the solution of every difficulty, the end of all perplexity. It seems to me as if, after puzzling over the cross-writing and hieroglyphics of men, I turned a fresh leaf, on the top of which stood those words, as the text to be preached out in all history, whether of the individual, the family, or the nation, the Church or the world. It seems as if, after revolving sorrowfully and helplessly all the difficulties and wants which distress my heart, I were at once rising above those floating clouds into clear atmosphere ; as if all at once I were unburdened ; as if I had reached a haven of rest ; as if I had found a firm foundation, an ultimate principle. After all, in every real trial there is but this one final and full comfort. What matters the opinion of men,—who may be for and who against me ; who may be with me, or who may leave me ? Who would speak of prospects or probabilities, of the support to be derived from wealth or power, or of the defections of friends on whose sympathy and help we had counted ? *Jehovah reigneth !* There is light here across my every path, provided I follow Christ, walking in the narrow way. Only let me be sure that, in any and every respect, I am on the Lord’s side and in the Lord’s way, and I ask no more. My God has all the silver and all the gold in His own hand. He

holdeth the hearts of all men at His disposal ; He directeth all events, from the least to the greatest. If I want power with God or with men, let me pray ; for, Jehovah reigneth. Nor let me think that special interpositions are either impossible or rare. They are constant. The course of God's providence is one of constant interposition ; for 'all things work together for good to them that love God.' Only, these interpositions are not violent, and therefore not noticed by the superficial observer ; they are the interpositions of all-wise and almighty God, not of poor, weak man ; they are *interpositions*, not *interferences* ; they are the working of the machinery by the Master-mind which designed, and the Master-hand which framed it. They are not the stoppage, but the working of the machinery, whereby its real object is wrought out. Lastly, let me note in the Psalm these three things : In *creation* and *nature* : pre-established law *along with* continuous, personal government,—not as opposed to, but as pre-supposing one another (vers. 1, 2). In *Providence* : 'The Lord on *high* is mightier than the noise of many waters'—which would otherwise strike terror, even as their swelling would threaten constant danger. And in *grace* : 'His testimonies are *very* sure.' I can rest on them. Not one tittle or iota shall fall to the ground. Wherever I have a word of promise, I can safely plant my steps. The conclusion and inference from the whole matter is, that 'holiness'—not fear nor man-serving, but separation unto the Lord—'becometh,' or is the right, wise, and proper attitude of His house and people.

1. Surely it is a very small thing for me to be judged by

man. Consider now, when tempted to despond, what the approbation of man can add, or what his power take away ; what his co-operation can accomplish, or what his desertion prevent. Nay, though he were not only the richest, the wisest, and the most powerful, but even the most earnest and devoted of men. A child of God must learn not to depend upon any other child ; he must learn to trust in the Lord alone. There are here snares and pitfalls on every side. The fear of man casteth out the fear of God, and the fear of God casteth out the fear of man. We are more than conquerors *through Him* that loved us,—never *through them*, but often despite of them. Bitter indeed is the pang of desertion—not merely by the world, but especially by the Church. Under such circumstances we are prone, if not to murmur, yet to despond. Those on whose sympathy I had reckoned, disappoint, perhaps even oppose. This sense of loneliness is like the horror of great darkness. But let me here, for my comfort, learn the lessons conveyed in 1 Pet. ii. 19, etc. Remember also, my soul, that thou hast not made man thy stay. Moreover, consider, that all a man has or is, is not really his own, but has been received from the Lord. The spring is not cut off, though its waters may seem diverted. Let me then go directly to the spring, and remember that my God reigneth.¹

¹ At the close of the apostate Julian's reign, dangers greater than ever before threatened the Christian Church. 'And what is your carpenter's Son about ?' tauntingly asked a philosopher of the day of a humble Christian. 'Making a coffin for your Emperor,' was the solemn reply, soon after literally verified ; for the Emperor never returned from the great expedition which was to have preceded the extermination of the Church.

2. Fear not, O my soul ; these proud, swelling waters shall not engulf thee. They will not engulf thy work. The Lord on high is mightier. I look to Thee, not to them. I take hold of Thy strength, and in my song I already celebrate this yet unseen triumph.¹

3. Above all, let me cherish His testimonies. My faith must be exercised in applying the promises, in gathering honey from these lilies of the valley. Lord, 'open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law,' and my heart now to receive them. Let me delight myself in God. His ways are always pleasant, His word is always true, His promise always sure—sealed to me in the covenant of grace. 'Lord, I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief.'

COMMIT thou all thy griefs
And ways into His hand,
To His sure truth and tender care,
Who earth and heaven commands.
Give to the winds thy fears ;
Hope, and be undismay'd,—
God hears thy sighs and counts thy fears,
God shall lift up thy head.
Through waves and clouds and storms
He gently clears thy way ;
Wait thou His time ; so shall this night
Soon end in joyous day.
Leave to His sovereign sway
To choose and to command :
So shalt thou wondering own, His way
How wise, how strong His hand !

PAUL GERHARDT.
JOHN WESLEY.

¹ The Germans have it : 'Be not alarmed, provision has been made that the trees shall not grow into heaven.'

XLIII.

THE CHURCH'S DOXOLOGY.

- 1 THE Lord reigneth ; let the people tremble :
He sitteth between the cherubims ; let the earth be moved.
- 2 The Lord is great in Zion ; and he is high above all people.
- 3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name ; for it is holy.
- 4 The king's strength also loveth judgment : thou dost establish equity,
Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.
- 5 Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool ;
For he is holy.
- 6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon
his name ;
They called upon the Lord, and he answered them.
- 7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar :
They kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them.
- 8 Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God : thou wast a God that forgavest
them,
Though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.
- 9 Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill :
For the Lord our God is holy.—PSALM XCIX.

THIS; the third of the series of Psalms commencing with 'Jehovah reigneth' (Psalm xciii. ; xcvii. ; xcix.), is the grand *Magnificat* of the Old Testament Church. It consists of three stanzas, each closing with 'He is holy' (vers. 1-3 ; vers. 4, 5, ver. 6 to end). Most aptly has Bengel summed up its contents in these words: 'the ninety-ninth Psalm consists of three parts, in which the Lord is praised as He who

is to come, as He who is, and as He who was, each part closing with the praise, He is holy.' Thus, part first describes the future glory of Messiah's reign, when all the nations trembling shall own Him, and earth stagger under His footsteps, when Jehovah shall be great in Zion, and exalted above all peoples, when they shall praise His great and terrible name. Judgment and mercy shall then be shown. Zion and the world shall then own Him, whom now we lowly adore : our holy Jehovah.

But Jehovah *is*. He now dispenses judgment ; He establishes equity. Above all, among His chosen people does He execute, in providence and in grace, judgment and righteousness. Highly we exalt ; lowly we worship in His presence, at His footstool : He is holy.

And Jehovah *was*. Scan that record of the past. Foremost stand those mighty men of prayer, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel. Foremost stands His mercy in hearing, His grace in answering, His presence in the cloudy pillar, and, withal, His pardoning love and His holiness in dealing with them. Highly exalt, lowly worship at His holy mount : for Jehovah our God is holy.

Thus—thrice holy, 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,' with seraphim and the four living creatures (Rev. iv. 8), does the Church 'give glory and honour and thanks,' most literally each in each of these three stanzas—to Him that sitteth on the throne, and liveth for ever and ever.' But what are we, to take His thrice holy name into our lips ! Perhaps never more deeply than in such moments feels the soul its low and miserable state, and mourns in the dust before Him.

This *is* a burden, and a heavy burden, till *He* remove it (Isa. vi. 5-8). And in truth, there is only one burden which is really heavy to bear—that of sin. Every other burden—that of care, of sorrow, of want, or of difficulty—sensibly drives us straight to God. This alone seems to keep us from God. What force the experience of a burdened conscience attaches to the expression, ‘Thy great and *terrible* name; for it is holy!’ The misery of sin consists not merely in its consequences, but in its very nature, which is to separate between God and our souls, and to shut us out from God, and God from us. Yet the Spirit of God indicates, in the covenant of grace, a threefold practical influence of His holiness upon us, of which the issue is the opposite of despair. The various steps are marked as praise, exaltation, and worship (vers. 3, 5, 9). Of these the last seems by far the most difficult to realize. For it is in the nature of conscious sin to prevent even our approaches to God, to keep us from all comfortable fellowship with God, and to fill us with a heavy sense of our infinite and almost hopeless distance from Him. Yet, we will ‘praise Thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.’ Great it is; most glorious and high; far above all human conceptions. Viewed in this light, even the fact, otherwise so consoling, ‘The Lord reigneth,’ leads only to the inference, ‘Let the people tremble;’ and ‘He sitteth between the cherubim’ (or manifesteth Himself as the covenant God), to the conclusion, ‘Let the earth be moved,’ or *stagger*. But His name is not only absolutely great and terrible in its manifestations, ‘it is holy,’ and *therefore* we ‘praise’ it. His greatness is all arrayed on the side of goodness, His power

on that of righteousness and truth. 'The King's *strength*' (that which makes Him great and terrible) 'also *loveth judgment*.' Hence the tendency of all His dealings is thus described: 'Thou dost establish equity, Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.' In the course of His government, He not only introduces, but *establisheth* equity; for 'the Lord reigneth.' Similarly, the manifestation of His 'terrible name' is to the effect: 'Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.' It is therefore right, proper, and becoming to '*exalt* the Lord our God,' 'for He is holy' (ver. 5). Now, it seems as if at this, the point of our utmost despondency of self, we had also reached the 'door of hope.' He is great and terrible in Himself, and in His dealings. He is holy, and I am a sinner. The more I contemplate this, and praise and exalt His name, the lower I seem to sink, and the more depressing becomes the sense of my own vileness and unworthiness, till I am cast down to the lowest pit of self-abasement and self-despair. As the clouds which had obscured my vision roll away, the arch of heaven seems to extend its span, and higher, and yet higher, far above me, enthroned in His brightness, is that Holy One of Israel, whose glory filleth the whole earth. What am I, then—dust and ashes, sinful and sin-laden—to hold converse with that God! How dare I, a man of sinful lips, to look up to the King, Jehovah of hosts? Like Manoah, I tremble; like Isaiah, I say, 'Woe is me! for I am undone;' like Peter, I had almost prayed, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' But here another fact meets me, by way of gracious contrast: 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that

He loved us.' 'When we were yet *enemies*, we were reconciled by the death of His Son.' There is not only a gleam, but a flood of light. When I try to think, and tremble as I think, of God in all the exaltation of His nature, and the glory of His character, the sound of the gospel message bursts as heaven's music upon my ear and heart. This God, this very God, *is in Christ*. Therefore He stretches down His hands even to me in my abasement. This is the sum and substance, the essence of the gospel. Surely the greatest greatness of God is His condescension ; His highest glory, His self-abasement ! Thus when in thought I reach the highest point attainable in His exaltation, I come straight to Christ, and then *I worship*. No longer do I merely exalt, or even praise ; at least, no longer is it merely the tribute of the creature ; it is the offering of the child. I do not merely praise, I also *worship*. No longer am I afar off, but very near. I may and do come. My whole heart and soul goes out after Him. There is a blood-sprinkled way, reaching from my lowly spot even to the highest heavens ; and there the Father meets me with the welcome of free grace—of undeserved, marvellous, sovereign love. I must sing, for my heart is full of joy. The great load is taken from me. I tread well-known ground. I am on Calvary's height. I see the well-known face, Jesus my Redeemer. I hear the well-remembered angels' song, which celebrates another manifestation of Divine grace and glory, another fruit of sovereign love. This path has been trod by many a pilgrim. From it have risen those precious pearly drops, which together form the great cloud of witnesses—'Moses and Aaron among His priests, and

Samuel among them that call upon His name' (ver. 6). His exaltation in holiness has brought me face to face with His condescension in love.

Now I can pray ; I am '*among* them that call upon His name.' 'They called upon Jehovah, and He answered *them*'—why not me? Moreover, from this point His holiness is perceived to be specially manifested in accordance with His love, in the covenant of grace. The blood-sprinkled mercy-seat rests on the ark which encloses His law. The demands of justice and holiness have been fully met in Christ Jesus. Even in His 'terrible' dealings we now note that 'He sitteth between the cherubim' (ver. 1) ; that He 'is great *in Zion*' (ver. 2) ; that He is 'the King' of saints (ver. 4). Nor will I forget that the King's highway is one of holiness, or of being separated and conformed to Him—transformed into His image. 'He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar'—this was *His* revelation in grace. 'They kept His testimonies, and the ordinance that He gave them'—that was *their* reply by grace. And oh, the blessed assurance that nothing can disturb our standing in the covenant (ver. 8). Answer and forgiveness are certain, though vengeance is taken of our inventions. How every word and expression here seems to go right to our hearts ! The very designation of our sins and punishments is so true. Yet, withal, we are not shut out from Him. We are able to speak to, and to hear Him ; we receive what we need, and much more ; and, above all, we have the sweet, abiding sense of forgiveness, notwithstanding 'our inventions.' When we smart under chastisements or disappointments, we know that it is the fire which

burns up the hay, wood, and stubble—a Father's dealings in compassion and mercy. We willingly, we gladly take these chastisements, which now are to us fresh pledges of our safety. For safe, eternally safe, remains the foundation, and unclosed the way of access. O surely with all our heart do we accord: 'Exalt Jehovah *our* God, and worship at His holy hill: for Jehovah *our* God is holy.'

1. O my soul, thou hast often groaned under the burden of sin. It was not so much that thou didst despair, as that thou didst despond. It was not that Christ seemed unable or unwilling to save thee, but that thou couldest not realize Christ. All seemed like a dreary blank. An awful weight of oppression seemed to press me down. The more I sought to draw near to God, the farther He seemed to remove from me, till at last I had almost resigned myself to silence and darkness. But it is not so. It is right and well that sin should bear me down. God *is* 'great' and 'high,' and 'His name' 'great and terrible.' But 'God is in Christ;' and though my sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as snow; though they be like crimson, they shall become like wool. O that blessed gospel-sound, like springs of water in a dry and thirsty land, like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land! O wondrous grace, which is grace to *me*!

2. I can pray, I may pray, I must pray. There is 'His footstool,' therefore He can be *worshipped*. Moses, Aaron, and Samuel have knelt at it; therefore, and on the same ground of His absolute love and of my absolute need, may *I* kneel at it. 'They called upon Jehovah, and He answered them;' therefore I must pray. I need forgiveness and an

answer. Whom He answers, He always forgives ; and whom He forgives, He always answers. Not the brightness of Thy nature, but the glory of Thy love ; not the thunders of Sinai, but the words on the cross, 'It is finished,' are my warrant and my plea ; and this plea is all-prevailing.

3. Now, when I have learned to '*worship* at His holy hill,' I feel 'that we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.' It is quite a different kind of dealing, and I take it quite differently. There is not a drop of wrath in the cup, and there is not a drop of bitterness in me. It is right and well that it should be so, both as regards His character, His truth, and my wellbeing ; and I can now 'exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool ; for He is holy.' Chastisements have to me a totally new meaning. 'Judgment must begin at the house of God.' Yet, oh, let me remember in my prayers, and in my dealings with the world, how awful those judgments will be which must consume the wicked ; and this day let me prayerfully read once more over the four opening verses of the Psalm, and plead for my brethren at a throne of grace.

HOLY, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty !

Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee ;

Holy, holy, holy ! Merciful and mighty !

God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity !

Holy, holy, holy ! all the saints adore Thee,

Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea,

Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee ;—

Which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be !

BISHOP HEBER.

XLIV.

HOLY RESOLUTIONS.

- 1 I WILL sing of mercy and judgment : unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.
- 2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me?
I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.
- 3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes :
I hate the work of them that turn aside ; it shall not cleave to me.
- 4 A froward heart shall depart from me ; I will not know a wicked person.
- 5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off ;
Him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.
- 6 Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land,
That they may dwell with me :
He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.
- 7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house :
He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.
- 8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land ;
That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord.—PSALM CI.

SUCH a hymn of praise as the grand doxology of Ps. xcix. could not die away without an echo. Accordingly, Ps. c. may be regarded as forming the chorus of the Church, and this as taking up and applying that part of the doxology which celebrated the *present* manifestation of the 'King in His beauty.' More especially does it convert into appropriate praise the precious experience of Ps. xcix. 4 : 'The King's

strength also loveth judgment : Thou dost establish equity, Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.' For what He loveth we celebrate and we long for ; what He establisheth we seek to obtain ; what He executeth, we endeavour, through grace, to see accomplished. Thus is 'the same mind' in us also which was in Him ; we follow in His footsteps, and become 'fellow-workers' with Him. In this manner pray we : 'Thy kingdom come,' that, while well assured that only the promise of the King Himself will restore order and peace, yet we immediately add, in word and deed and endeavour : 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.' Ours it is not only to hope, but to believe ; and because we believe, to speak and to act. And how much influence for good the prayers, the example, and the efforts of even the humblest Christian can exercise, the history of the Church has amply proved. Every one occupies not the position of a David, but every one may have a kingly heart ; and so far as in him lies, if under the influence of grace, may carry out the holy resolutions of vers. 2-8.

Thus, as one has observed, more clearly than anything else, this short hymn discloses to us the spiritual elevation of David's soul, and the full light which shone in upon his heart. For the Psalm reads like a short and involuntary outburst of feelings long cherished, without any attempt at completely exhausting the subject. And as the heart of David was completely filled with this one grand experience, as this one object wholly engrossed him, and here expressed itself in one special manner, so this hymn forms also an unbroken whole,

without division into stanzas. Yet, as indicating the harmony of his soul, it is remarkable that this most experimental is also one of the most musical and rhythmical of the Psalms, as may even be gathered from this specimen :—

‘ Mercy and judgment will I sing—to thee, Jehovah, psalmody ;
Wisely behave in a perfect way—when wilt thou come to me ?
I will walk with a perfect heart—in the midst of my house.
I will not set before mine eyes—a thing of Belial.’

In the opening words of this hymn its keynote is struck : ‘ I will sing of mercy and judgment.’ Here we perceive the twofold manifestation of God’s character, the twofold meaning of the past, and the twofold bearing of the future. ‘ Mercy,’ or grace, flows from the infinite love of the Father in Christ Jesus our Saviour. ‘ Judgment’ is equity, truth, holiness, and righteousness in their application. Upon these two primary facts in the Divine character and administration the believer fixes his eye ; these he exalts in his song of praise. From them also spring alike his hope for the present and the future of himself and of the Church, and the motives of his conduct. Because he thus keeps his mind and heart fixed upon the revelation of God, he understands the past, and he can regulate and dispose his own future. Thy mercy is my hope ; Thy righteousness my guide. Influenced by a constraining sense of Thy mercy, I purify myself, I determine my bearing towards others, I form holy resolutions, and separate myself, in conduct, in speech, and in undertakings, from the world, joining myself to Thee and Thy people, and looking forward ‘ unto the perfect day.’

It is indeed pleasant and profitable to review the history

of the past, if by grace we can sum it up into devout acknowledgment of God, and spiritual resolutions for the future. How much of 'mercy and judgment' marks our past course! A brutish man knoweth not, a fool understandeth not. This inability to discern the controlling and guiding element of sovereign love, on the one hand, and of holiness, on the other, explains the practical atheism and the misery of the men of this world. The absence of the *living God*, like that of the sun in the material world, must result in gloom and death. The recognition by faith of His mercy and of His judgments, sheds light and joy across our path. We walk at large, and praise the Lord. Then, even though there be judgments, we can '*sing*' of them—both so far as we and others are concerned—for all things must work together for good to them that love Him (ver. 1). The tendency of all His dealings is to make us walk 'wisely in a perfect way.' But for this purpose we require the quickening influence of His felt presence. We cannot walk in a perfect way, except in company with Jesus. If we live in the Spirit, we shall also walk in the Spirit (ver. 2). But ah! how difficult to separate ourselves wholly, in heart, speech, and behaviour, from the world (vers. 3, 4, 5). It is strange—this is the only word which truly expresses the feeling evoked—as well as most humbling to notice, how, even after years of teaching and following the Lord, the heart seems still to cling to vanity and sin. What a hold has besetting sin upon the imagination! To 'set the thing of Belial before mine eyes' (ver. 3), is the bitter root of most evil. Yet though in His holiness the Lord sometimes allows the lust conceived in the heart to bring forth sin, as

even in the case of Abraham (Gen. xii. 12, 13), yet it is most comforting to observe how frequently and marvellously His providence co-operates with His grace in keeping His people from transgressing. Thus we have an almost hourly answer to the prayer, 'Lead us not into temptation.' Let us well mark, however, the resolution of the renewed soul through grace ; the inward separation (ver. 3), the outward separation from all wicked doers (ver. 4), and especially its horror of those plague-spots of the Church and of society—a slanderous tongue, an high look, and a proud heart (ver. 5). Most clear and distinct also is the longing of the spiritual mind after fellowship with believers ; the choice of godly counsels, in opposition to carnal desires, being laid down as a first principle of conduct (vers. 6, 7). Nor let us forget that the holy vow 'to destroy all the wicked of the land,' and to 'cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord,' must begin at our own hearts as His sanctuary, the temple of the Holy Ghost.

1. What is my record of God's dealings? Is it careful and mindful? do I note His leadings and mark His interposition, specially with the view of beholding His glory, the manifestation of His love and His holiness, and of throwing light on His covenant? Providence exhibits grace, and grace illustrates providence; both are the working of our covenant God in and through Christ. Again, is my record of His dealings in the voice of song; is it gladsome, filial, and trustful? Is it so in regard to the past, and in prospect of to-day's duties and trials?

2. How may I walk more wisely in a perfect way? What may I do to-day in following the Lord and seeking to serve Him by doing or suffering? God's way is to-day for me a

perfect way, however otherwise it may appear to blind unbelief. If I am straitened, it is not in Him. Let me then cast myself unreservedly upon Him, and by faith seek to pierce the gloom; let me entreat His direction, and with simplicity and earnestness of heart concern myself with this one thing—to cling unto Christ with soul and life.

3. Let me now bring all my sins, but especially my besetting sin, to Christ; to wash away its guilt, and to find grace to help. This day let me pray and watch, and beware of mine eyes, my tongue, and my heart.

4. Let me be jealous of my feelings towards His saints; let me ever view them as *His* children. Do I really regard them as *brethren*; do I *love* the brethren—all the brethren? Am I concerned for Christ's Church, without respect of sect or party—the body of Christ; and wherein do I seek to promote its increase and wellbeing? Let me now seek to realize the *spiritual* character of the Church, and my own living connexion with it, and with Him who is its exalted Head. 'Out of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace.'

HOLY SPIRIT, come, we pray,
Come from heaven and shed the ray
Of Thy light Divine.

What is arid, fresh bedew;
What is sordid, cleanse anew;
Balm on the wounded pour.

What is rigid, gently bend;
On what is cold, Thy fervour send;
What has stray'd, restore.

KING ROBERT II. OF FRANCE.
(*The Voice of Christian Life in Song.*)

XLV.

COMFORT TO THE MOURNER.

- 1 HEAR my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee.
2 Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble ;
 Incline thine ear unto me : in the day when I call answer me speedily.
3 For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an
 hearth.
4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass : so that I forget to eat my
 bread.
5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.
6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness : I am like an owl of the desert.
7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top.
8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day ;
 And they that are mad against me are sworn against me.
9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,
10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath : for thou hast lifted me up, and
 cast me down.
11 My days are like a shadow that declineth ; and I am withered like grass.
12 But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever ;
 And thy remembrance unto all generations.—PSALM CII.

OUR seasons of holy gladness and spiritual resolution are, alas, in our present state but transient. Perhaps the very intensity of our asseveration to be, to act, and to appear on the Lord's side, may lead us to self-examination, to discoveries of our weakness and backsliding, and even to deep sorrow and

almost despondency. Thus, by being made to look into our hearts, even after grace has laid hold on us, we learn to know our misery, and our need of Him, and are ever cast afresh upon the infinite compassion and the unfailing help of our blessed Redeemer. Accordingly, the earnest entreaty, 'When wilt Thou come unto me?' (Ps. ci. 2) is taken up in the language of deepest humiliation, 'let my cry come unto Thee' (Ps. cii. 1). It is indeed, as the inscription bears, 'a cry of the poor and needy, when he faints and fails' (compare the term thus paraphrased with Ps. lxi. 2, and the precious promise in Isa. lvii. 16), 'and pours out his meditative complaint before Jehovah.' Indeed, these words, 'I will not contend for ever, neither will I always be wroth: for the spirit should fail before *Me*, and the souls which I have made,' might be placed as inscription over this Psalm. Most precious encouragement this in our 'meditative complaint'—not a mere complaint, but prayerful also, and mindful of His covenant mercy and His covenant promises. And so the Psalm, which opens with such mournful words, closes in the bright anticipation, not only of redemption, but of the consummation of all things, and of His people with them (ver. 26–28). The Lord will not only arise and have mercy upon Zion when the 'set time is come,' but 'the heathen shall fear the name of Jehovah.' He will not only 'build up Zion,' and 'appear in His glory,' but (as included in it and giving *present* comfort in *present* trouble) 'He will regard the prayer of the destitute.' For as all suffering and sorrow pointed forward to the suffering of Christ, the God-man, the second Adam, so all prophecy of the future glory, and even

of the restoration of all things, point back for comfort and consolation to the state and wants of God's people at all times. That is the *full* consolation, this its first-fruits ; that is the *full* deliverance, this its commencement ; and the same principles which shall be fully unfolded at last are every day applied for the deliverance of the Church as a whole, and of believers in their individual capacity. And so all past history of our sufferings contains a principle which truly applied to Him, and all future glory of the Church, a principle which even now truly applies to us ; and thus has Scripture ever an eternal meaning, reaching far beyond man, and a present application, even in its loftiest strains, ever descending to our lowest estate. Accordingly, we do not wonder to find, at the close of this Psalm, the comprehensive view expressed of God's works, in the widest sense—the record of the first creation of heaven and earth by Jesus Christ (see the application of vers. 25-27 to our Lord in Heb. i. 10), bringing up the promise of the new heavens and the new earth (ver. 26), rendered necessary by the state of matters complained of in this 'prayer of the needy.'

The general scope of the Psalm, and its connexion with the following, has been well traced by one as follows : 'To feel sin and death, and under it to wrestle for grace and pardon, and to seek after the kingdom of God and His righteousness, is the subject-matter of Psalm cii. To feel sin and death, and withal to have received pardon, and the Spirit who maketh alive, and thus to praise God, and in faith and patience to join one's-self to all God's saints, is the subject-matter of Ps. ciii.' Whatever the immediate occasion of this

complaint may have been, it is the cry of the Church in dark and evil days, in which by faith and prayer she gradually rises above the things seen to assurance of God's mercy, and to bright anticipation of the full glory to come. Thus it is prophetic as well as historical.

The Psalm opens in the manner, and almost with the words, of so many others uttered under similar circumstances (vers. 1, 2). For these three features of sin, mercy, and deliverance—of confession, faith, and joy—are the fundamental characteristics of the hymnal of the Church. One has designated such words as 'the old and stereotyped words of God, which spontaneously rise in the heart and on the lips of every one who giveth himself to prayer.' The peculiar wants and feelings of the Psalm appear with ver. 3. What an expression of felt misery under a deep sense of God's displeasure! His 'days' or life 'consumed in smoke'—passing like the unused fuel; his bones (or innermost being) 'burned as an hearth'; his 'heart smitten and withered like grass'—and all enjoyments and pleasures converted into sorrow and bitterness. And if such is our *partial* sense of His 'indignation' and 'wrath' (the terms here used being the strongest in the language), what would the full realization in eternity be! Mark its effects upon his heart. He seems to himself like one of those unclean birds, tenanted desert and ruined places (ver. 4). During the hours allotted to sleep 'I wake,' like a little bird which sits solitary on the house-top, while all beneath enjoy the sleep which He giveth to His beloved. The rage of his enemies has been unloosed against him: 'they that are raging against me, swear by me'—make me

their curse, imprecating my fate upon others (ver. 8). Ashes are his bread, and tears the wine of his cup (ver. 9). All this because of 'Thine indignation and Thy wrath'—till his days seem like a prolonged shadow, extending and deepening into the gloom of night, and he himself like 'herb withered,' plucked up by the root, and therefore withering. Such is the grievous misery to which he has been brought, and out of this there seems only one way of escape,—by grace. And this shining path which now opens before him, he is enabled to pursue in the exercise of most humble, most earnest, and answered prayer.

There are seasons in the experience of the Christian, where prayer is his only, and, we might almost say, his last resort. We seem to have lost all consciousness of faith and every motion of hope; and nothing is left us but to cry unto the Lord. It is emphatically 'the day when I am in trouble.' Such 'trouble' may not primarily arise from spiritual causes, but be occasioned by something outward, as by sickness, desertion, persistent opposition, slander, or felt desolateness. Indeed, all these seem to be included in the complaint of this Psalm. Through the intimate and inseparable connexion of all things with God, and our intercourse with Him, they bear directly upon our spiritual state, just as from a similar intimate connexion the condition of the body has its influence upon the mind. If, under such circumstances, God *could* forsake us—we say it reverently—our condition would indeed be terrible. But for all needed help He will be inquired of. Despair is the consequence of want of prayer. Deliverance and prayer are wedded in the covenant of grace. 'Call upon

Me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee.' So the Psalmist found it, and so God's people find it every day. It is when we *lean* upon the staff that we feel how strong is its support. Over against the experience of darkness and trouble stands the record of signal deliverance, running not only parallel to it, but far outrunning it, as John outran Peter. And ever when we come to the tomb, we find it empty—for Christ is not here, He is risen! The world's tears are dried up by time, those of the Christian are wiped away by the hand which still bears the print of the nails. They are also preserved in His bottle. In seasons of anguish, let me straightway fall upon my knees and tell all to God; even though I enjoy not the sensible presence of God, though I feel no present encouragement to prayer or in prayer, though it seems as if I were beating the very air. If I can say nothing else, I may at least—under a sense, or in the apprehension of spiritual desertion—entreat God *not* to hide His face from me. I can also tell Him all my state, entering particularly into every aggravating circumstance. If I only go deep enough, I shall at last come upon the Rock. 'But Thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever, and Thy remembrance unto all generations.' And when the Rock is struck, it gushes forth its living waters.

1. Before I pray, and when I pray, let me remember that my encouragement in prayer is derived *not* from anything in myself, but from Him alone. 'The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.' If I keep this in view, I shall be able at all times to go to Him; for my varying circumstances, wants, or state of

mind and heart, in nowise affect either my reason or my warrant for praying. Both these are derived directly from what He is in Christ Jesus. Nay, what in my perverseness I feel as discouragements, should rather incite me to prayer. The want of His felt presence, the fear of being left to myself, and the manifold troubles under which I labour, are they not so many reasons to 'arise and call' upon my God? In this connexion let me *now* believably ponder the parable which shows 'that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.'

2. O my soul, dark clouds have this day gathered around thee. The heart knoweth its own bitterness. But reason not with thyself; least of all seek for comfort from sight or from carnal counsels. Go straight to God, go as thou art. Perhaps I may not be able at present even to search into this matter, with a view to the confession of my sin in connexion with it, until I have prayed. Let not Satan rob me of this. Let me now cast myself at the feet of Christ; for truly, next to the apprehension of the hiding of His face from me, is the fear of my hiding my face from Him.

3. O that I could at last learn this lesson: 'Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?' How unwilling and loath is my heart to give up this dependence upon the creature! How often have I experienced the bitter disappointment and the keen pang of being forsaken by man, and that when help seemed most needed. The stoop broke under me when, weary, I most longed for its support. 'Trust not in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no stay.' But does not this drive

me *to-day* to Thee, who 'shalt endure for ever?' 'The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever'—in infinite grace, in almighty power, in unsearchable wisdom, in inexhaustible goodness, in never-failing truth, and in ever-ready help. Thus, if Thou cast me loose from my pleasant anchorage, drive me *now* to Thyself; and let me now, in blessed experience, O Lord Jesus, know it, that 'Thou art a refuge to them that are oppressed!'

A THOUSAND years have fled,

And, Saviour! still we see

Thy deed of love repeated

On all who come to Thee.

As he who sat benighted,

Afflicted, poor, and blind;

So now (Thy word is plighted)

Joy, light, and peace I find.

I came with steps that falter'd;

Thy course I felt Thee check;

Then straight my mind was alter'd,

And bow'd my stubborn neck.

Thou saidst, 'What art thou seeking?'

'O Lord, that I might see!'

Oh! then I heard Thee speaking,

'Believe, and it shall be.'

Our hope, Lord, faileth never,

When Thou Thy word dost plight;

My fears then ceased for ever,

And all my soul was light.

Thou gavest me Thy blessing;

From former guilt set free,

Now heavenly joy possessing,

O Lord, I follow Thee!

F. DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ.

(F. *Elis. Cox.*)

XLVI.

THE PRIEST-KING.

- 1 THE LORD said unto my Lord,
Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
- 2 The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion :
Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.
- 3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,
In the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning :
Thou hast the dew of thy youth.
- 4 The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent.
Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.
- 5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his
wrath.
- 6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead
bodies ;
He shall wound the heads over many countries.
- 7 He shall drink of the brook in the way : therefore shall he lift up the head.

PSALM CX.

IF ever to inspired seer a clear and close view of future glory was granted, it was when, under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, David sung this prophecy of Christ. From first to last it wholly and solely refers to the Messiah. No other passage of Old Testament Scripture is so frequently applied in the New Testament to Jesus as this (Matt. xxii. 41-46 ; Mark xii. 35-37 ; Luke xx. 41-44 ; Acts ii. 34 ; 1 Cor.

xv. 25 ; Heb. i. 13 ; v. 6 ; vii. 17, 21 ; x. 13). Accordingly it has been well designated the crown of all the Psalms, of which Luther saith that it is worthy to be overlaid with precious jewels. More especially does the Reformer call ver. 5 a well-spring,—nay, a treasury of all Christian doctrine, understanding, wisdom, and comfort, richer and fuller than any other passage of Holy Writ. In his own peculiar manner, he styles Christ the *Sheblimini* ('Sit on My right hand'). 'Full sure, the devil must let alone my *Sheblimini*, and cannot bring Him down either by his scorn or by his wrath.' 'Christ still liveth and reigneth, and His title is *Sheblimini*. On His stirrup is engraven, "I will make Thine enemies Thy footstool," and upon His diadem, "Thou art a Priest for ever."'

The Psalm embodies two solemn utterances of Jehovah concerning His Son (vers. 1, 4), around which the twofold prophecy of His first and second coming moves. In consequence of the first saying, the promise of ver. 1 is given. In connexion with the second saying (ver. 4), or the oath of covenant-assurance, the intervention of ver. 5 shall take place. Similarly, the gracious willingness of ver. 3 is contrasted with the judgment of ver. 6, while ver. 7 forms a fit complement and conclusion of the picture of Messiah. When Jehovah the Father maketh the Son of David and Lord of David sit at His right hand, it implies not only the exaltation of the Messiah on the completion of His work upon earth, but His sharing in the government. Accordingly, the sceptre of His power or sovereignty is stretched forth out of Zion, and around Him gather His subjects, bringing them-

selves as freewill offerings, or, as one renders it, they gather 'on the day of Thine army-muster' as freewill offerings. Thus it would indicate, that when Jesus gathers His host, they freely offer themselves. But perhaps, more simply and correctly : 'Thy people, freewill offerings in the day of Thy power ; in the priestly garments of holiness ; from the womb of the morning, Thou hast the dew of Thy youth,'—the offspring of the morning, the Church of the first-born, sparkling innumerable, like dew on the ground (see also Isa. xxvi. 19). This priestly nation, whose priestly vestments are the garments of holiness, has a priestly King, on whom in His covenant by oath, Jehovah has conferred an eternal priesthood, prefigured at the commencement of the covenant-dispensation by Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem. And now with the public manifestation of this eternal fact commences the Millennial judgment, in which 'He shall wound the head' (or Antichrist) 'over the wide earth.' And thus He 'who humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,' 'shall lift up the head ;' 'that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

Viewed in this light, the Psalm is a prophetic song in honour of the Priest-King. It sounds the praises of Jesus. Nor does anything find more cordial response in the hearts of Christians than the praises of Jesus. To each announcement of His exaltation, we respond with an *Amen*. 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and

wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' It seems as if every term were exhausted to express, however inadequately, the feelings of the redeemed. What gives such depth of tone to this Hallelujah is, that the blessings purchased apply to us. 'Jehovah said unto *my* Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand.' Christ is not only enthroned at the right hand of the Majesty on high, but as our Advocate. All that He is, He is for us. The measure of His greatness is also that of our safety and glory. My salvation is bound up with His exaltation. If it is unbelief not to recognise this, it is surely misbelief not to derive comfort and joy from it. Christ is known in heaven and earth only as our Redeemer. For this purpose He has united His divinity to our humanity ; with this object He sitteth at the right hand of the Father, as 'our Priest for ever.' Why, then, should we hesitate to acknowledge and proclaim what He publisheth and sheweth forth on earth and in heaven ? The first sounds which greeted earth, in the grey morning of her new day, were, '*Unto us* a Child is born, *unto us* a Son is given ; and the government shall be upon His shoulder.' And again, this is the first view to burst upon our sight in heaven : 'Lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.' Of all the crowns He wears, the brightest is that as 'Melchi-Zedek, King of Righteousness,' Prince of Peace—of *our* righteousness and of *our* peace. Thus, when viewing Christ, let us ever cherish a *personal* apprehension of Him. Thoughts of Christ are cold and theoretical, when the hand of faith is not stretched out to

appropriate, according to the gospel, all that He is. In our present state, we can understand but little of what He is in Himself; but Scripture has told us much of what He is *to us*, and this we may make all our own. But transcendent as the glory of Christ is even now, as yet it is but dimly manifested. He still '*sitteth*' at His right hand—enthroned indeed, but, as it were, at rest. What when He 'shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath!' Indeed, the Psalm seems to furnish a brief outline of the whole Messianic history, from the ascension of Christ to His return to our earth. Connecting itself with the last verse of the preceding Psalm, it describes the sabbatic period in vers. 1-3, with its eternal and immovable basis in ver. 4, and the commencement of the millennial glory in vers. 5 and 6, with the ground and foundation of the covenant arrangement in ver. 7. Jehovah-Jesus, 'my Lord,' at God's right hand, *until He* maketh His enemies His footstool! Here is the starting point and the terminating point. The enemies seem to throng around Him with vain efforts. When we hear 'the tumult of the people,' let us remember both the *present* and the *future*—what now takes place in heaven, and also the Divine '*until*,' or what will certainly take place on earth. This '*until*' was in one sense more difficult, in another perhaps more easy, to realize, when He was led forth, and the 'Behold the Man!' evoked the blasphemous fury of His adversaries. 'We see not yet all things put under Him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.' 'Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.' And what holy calm

ness and confidence does it afford, when we plant our feet upon this firm foundation of the Divine Word! Meantime 'the government is upon His shoulder;' for He has the key of David. The government both of the world and of the Church is in accordance with the purposes of the covenant of grace (ver. 2). Hence 'all things are ours, for Christ is ours.' 'All things *must* work together for good to them that love Him, that are the called according to His purpose.' It cannot be otherwise, whether so far as the Church as a whole or individual believers are concerned. How sweet to think of providence and grace as the two arms with which our Saviour-King surrounds and shields His people! There can be nothing to dread in a future which is arranged to carry out the covenant of grace; there can be nothing really dark in clouds which are charged with blessing.

This doctrine of God's providence, which in reality means, *Christ's providing*, is precious to timid saints, or believers who fail adequately to realize the object of their faith. Notice, next, His gracious influence upon His own, exerted along with and in the course of His 'rule.' Observe His power, and their willingness—they being made willing, and their hearts sweetly inclined by the power of His grace; and then 'the womb of the morning,' the commencement—the 'Let there be light'—of a new creative day, and, as its result, 'the priestly garments of holiness.' 'Thou hast the dew of Thy youth.' It is spring-time, and pearly drops, which reflect the Sun of Righteousness, hang on each blade which has sprung from 'the seed of the kingdom,' till the mantle of earth's fresh beauty covers what winter had bared and overlaid with the

sheet of death. And oh, what sure word of promise, what a blessed fact on which to rest our hopes and our joys : 'The Lord hath *sworn*, and will not repent' (despite our sin, weakness, and ingratitude; for it is the *covenant*, and that of grace), '*Thou art* a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.' 'Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' The true Melchizedek is our Priest for ever. 'That by *two* immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have *strong* consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.' Then, when the period of grace has passed, that of judgment comes, when Melchizedek will buckle on His armour—'my King righteousness'—and arise to judge the earth, and to assume publicly that government which had ever belonged to Him, and with which the Father had long invested Him (vers. 5, 6). Yet—most comforting in the midst of wrath and terror—this Judge and Avenger is He who has humbled Himself, and become obedient unto death (ver. 7). 'Therefore also God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name.' Because of His humiliation, His exaltation; and He who so humbled Himself, will, when He appears in all the brightness of millennial glory, be *still the same Jesus*—who loved us, and died for us, and ever liveth to make intercession for us.

I. 'A Priest for ever'—what blessed assurance this conveys to my soul! He ever intercedeth for me at the right hand of God; He ever provideth all that is needful; He ever dispenseth all grace. Two scriptural conclusions follow, which, as being the very word of God, I may hold fast and

act upon to the fullest. 'Let *us* therefore come *boldly* unto the throne of grace, *that* we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' Again : 'Let us draw near with a *true* heart, *in full assurance of faith*, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.'

2. Am I one of the 'willing people'—not only my obedience and allegiance secured from a conviction of the truth, but my heart inclined, and my will renewed? To *do* the will of God, to *bear* the will of God, to *coincide* with the will of God—and that with calm if not cheerful consent of the heart, as seeing Him who is invisible, and holding fast my living apprehension of His Person and character? All unwillingness, whether practical or lurking in the heart, springs from unbelief—from a failure to realize Him or His purposes. Were Jesus, as God become incarnate, and giving Himself for me, and His counsel of grace towards me, ever or even in any measure before my heart, how could I hesitate to yield myself, absolutely and implicitly, to Him and His guidance? Again, this 'willingness' is the essence of holiness; it constitutes 'the beauties of holiness'—the beauty of Christ cast over the soul. The cure, therefore, for all my misery and sin is more faith, more of Christ, and nearer to Him. This let me seek and ask with ever-increasing earnestness. 'For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light shall we see light.'

3. With what holy calmness may we not view the attempts of the enemy, whether against ourselves, the Church of God, or His truth! The future history of the kingdom is as clearly

revealed as its past and present state have been declared. This conviction must inspire me with holy earnestness, ardour, and zeal. How should I pray and labour, seeing victory is so certain and near! Let me avoid an idle, selfish Christianity. 'No man liveth unto himself.' I must have something to say to the Lord and to do for the Lord, *this day* and every day. Were it otherwise, He would not have left me here this day, with the charge, 'Occupy till I come.' An idle Christianity becomes a morbid Christianity. Let me seek to do something for *Him*, directly, not indirectly. For the *what* and the *how*, I must wait upon Him. Let me, however, beware of any *impatience* in that matter. 'He that believeth shall not make haste.' Mine it is to *follow*, not to go before; but oh, for grace to *follow*!

JESUS, our Redemption now,
Our Desire and Love art Thou :
God before Creation's prime,
Man born in the end of time.

What compassion vanquish'd Thee,
Brought Thee to the shameful tree;
Bearing our transgressions there,
Thy redeem'd from death to spare!

Piercing to the depths of hell,
All its strength before Thee fell,—
Ransoming Thy captive band,
Seated now at God's right hand.

Love constrain'd Thee, Lord, to this,
That we might partake Thy bliss;
O'er our sin abounds Thy grace,—
Satisfy us with Thy face.

ANCIENT HYMN.

(*Voice of Christian Life in Song.*)

XLVII.

QUIET RESTING-PLACES.

- 1 I LOVE the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.
- 2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.
- 3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me : I found trouble and sorrow.
- 4 Then called I upon the name of the Lord ; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul !
- 5 Gracious is the Lord, and righteous ; yea, our God is merciful.
- 6 The Lord preserveth the simple : I was brought low, and he helped me.
- 7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul ; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.
- 8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death,
Mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.
- 9 I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.
- 10 I believed, therefore have I spoken : I was greatly afflicted.
- 11 I said in my haste, All men are liars.
- 12 What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me ?

PSALM CXVI.

THIS Psalm of grateful praise includes a record of past misery and gracious deliverance. It states what the believer has found in Jehovah, and on the ground of experienced covenant mercy offers holy vows unto Him who hath delivered the 'soul from death,' the 'eyes from tears,' and the 'feet from falling.' Though resembling in some points

Ps. xviii., it has many distinctive features. Its first utterance is that of *love*, on the ground of prayer heard and deliverance granted. And even one answer, if really experienced, will ever lead us anew to the mercy-seat, and make prayer our lifelong occupation (ver. 2). 'And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.' More especially does this hold true of the *great* deliverance. In the agony of his soul, when without only trouble and within only sorrow could be found, he discovered the right way of escape, when from self he turned with entreating voice unto Jehovah (ver. 3, 4). And here, as ever, 'grace, mercy, and peace,' the full manifestation of the love of God, met him in the cross of Christ (ver. 5). In His own way He led him into light and peace. Earnestly seeking, he was not suffered to fail, for 'Jehovah preserveth the simple.' 'Thou hast revealed these things unto babes.' 'A bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench.' 'I was brought low, and *He* helped me' (ver. 6). 'A broken and a contrite heart Thou, Jehovah, wilt not despise.' And thus he found peace in finding Christ. The experience of His infinite bounty offers a sweet and safe resting-place unto the soul (ver. 7). The word *rest* is put in the plural, as indicating complete and entire rest, at all times and under all circumstances. Having experienced the strength of God in his own weakness, having tasted the grace of God, he calls, as it were, upon his soul to turn from those devious paths in which he had so long strayed, into the haven of eternal rest. And the completeness of this rest consists in the provision which has been made for *all* wants. Not

only pardon or deliverance from eternal death, but precious comfort and joy in Christ Jesus, and heart-and-life holiness have been granted (ver. 8). So that he who had been a stranger and an alien, now walks before Jehovah 'in the lands of the living,'—the plural number again indicating the extensiveness of his liberty. But all these privileges are enjoyed as in face and view of Jehovah, the living and life-giving God (ver. 9).

The more closely the gracious way is observed in which we have been led from darkness into light, the greater is our wonder and praise. When, brought to feel our state before God, we looked within, there was only fear: 'I was very much bowed down.' And when looking without, and listening to the counsels and suggestions of carnal men, we felt that all their devices were falsehood. Then through grace were we led to look upward, 'I believed: for I am speaking,'—and our lips were opened, and now and evermore will we pour forth the song of believing praise. For, having experienced such grace, 'what shall I render unto Jehovah for *all* His benefits toward me?' Eternity itself will not suffice to express what is due to Him. And henceforth all we are and all we have are His, who saved us with so great a salvation. Thus prayer answered—*the one* prayer heard—for ever afterwards opens our heart and our mouth unto God.

For there is, indeed, nothing which so much endears to us the name of our God as answers to prayer. Here we make our resting-places, and here we rear our memorial-stones. Answered prayer gives confidence for the future (ver. 2), comfort for the past (ver. 3), and deliverance from present

distress (ver. 4). Want of *joyous* assurance in prayer makes prayer itself a dull, formal, irksome duty. There cannot be uncertainty on this subject. God for Christ's sake *always* hears prayer—every prayer, even the faintest cry. Let us ever remember that this is our peculiar privilege under the dispensation of grace. One of the titles of our God is, 'Thou that hearest prayer;' and none other so closely connects earth to heaven, or our hearts to the mercy-seat. The reality, the quickness, and the fulness of such answers, are alike matter of experience. 'Yea, *whiles I was speaking in prayer*, even the man Gabriel . . . *being caused to fly swiftly* . . . informed me . . . At the *beginning* of thy supplications the commandment came forth.' 'Before they call, I will answer; and *while* they are yet speaking, I will hear.' 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.' Such answers, then, in grace, are specially connected with the glory of God. But he alone can really pray who really *knocks*—feels his need of admission, and that there is One 'within' waiting to hear his voice. Want of assurance in praying springs in great part from not realizing God as in Christ, or from not fully understanding the dispensation of grace. 'Gracious is the Lord, and righteous.' This free outgoing of undeserved and sovereign love in Christ, and the full satisfaction rendered for us by our Substitute, and accepted by the Father, must remove all hesitation. Our High Priest on high pleads for us; He *ever* pleads; He pleads for us even when we do not plead ourselves. I dare not doubt the Father; I cannot doubt the Son; I must not doubt the Spirit. All is done, and every barrier is swept away. Let

me not look to myself, but to Him,—Christ the chief cornerstone of the building ; the living, life-giving Vine ; the Husband of the bride ; the Head of the Church ; the Advocate of His people ; the Friend of sinners ; the Elder Brother of the ‘household ;’ the Saviour of the lost ; ‘the Way, the Truth, and the Life.’ Each of Christ’s titles seems one of the pearly gates through which blessed and unlimited views of heaven open. We must learn the simplicity of faith (ver. 6), which forgets even faith itself in the object of faith ; which is so much engrossed with Him on whom it leans, as to forget the hand that leans on Him. Christ is all. When I was brought low, He helped me. Thus, when in His light we clearly see light—when we receive the gospel as good news to our own hearts ; that God so loved *me* individually, as to give His Son for me ; that Christ sought and saved *me*, a lost sinner ; and that He ever liveth to make intercession for *me* ;—when I believe this, fully and literally, what a sudden rush of feeling, like mighty waters ! Holy joy, calm confidence, and fresh heart-and-life devotion to God, are then the outburst of the soul (ver. 7). Everything now seems to become plain, and we can return to our rest, and wait for the Lord. All things are ours (ver. 8), for Christ is ours. Work and duty seem easy, when the heart is thus greatly enlarged (ver. 9). Nay, there is even a peculiar joy in trials ; for, when cut off from our ordinary props and supplies, we learn by faith to rejoice in being cast wholly upon the Lord. The Lord is more sought, and therefore more found. In these seasons of distress we learn the tender mercies and the faithfulness of our God (vers. 10-12). Thus leaning upon Him, we feel His strong support, the joyous

realization of having Him as our portion, and the firm assurance that we are heard. What is this but the 'Abba, Father' of the Spirit—the first gleams of the bright morning of joy?

1. Consider this day, O my soul, what are thy past and present *experiences* as to answered prayer,—not as respects *general* petitions, but *special* requests, both for body and soul, for time and eternity, for thyself and for others. What are thy *present* burdens—spiritual, temporal? Let me detail them; let me cast them each and separately upon the Lord.

2. God in Christ—oh that all-absorbing truth! I would grasp it with my whole heart. Truly it is to me the spring from the smitten Rock; my joy in believing, my hope in praying, my comfort during the watches of the night. Let me *now* feed upon this Bread of Life.

3. Art thou, then, free—God's freeman—and are all things thine? What a debtor to grace! But why not seek much, ask much, have much—to-day, for thy *present* wants? Why not make *full* use of thine unspeakable privilege? And, O my soul, forget not that as all is *in* God, so all must be *for* God (vers. 16-19). What wants and petitions, then, have I to spread before God—for myself, for others? And still let me look up! His love and grace are infinitely beyond, not merely my asking, but even my requiring. 'Return unto *thy rest*, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt *bountifully* with thee.'

JESUS, thou Joy of loving hearts!
 Thou Fount of Life! Thou Light of men!
 From the best bliss that earth imparts
 We turn unfill'd to Thee again.

S. BERNARD.

XLVIII.

‘MY HELP.’

- 1 I WILL lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.
- 2 My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.
- 3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved : he that keepeth thee will not slumber.
- 4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.
- 5 The Lord is thy keeper : the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.
- 6 The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.
- 7 The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil ; he shall preserve thy soul.
- 8 The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in,
From this time forth, and even for evermore.—PSALM CXXI.

IN this, the second of the fifteen Psalms ‘of Degrees,’ (Ps. cxx.-cxxxiv.), the peculiar characteristic of the series is very fully marked. For the common title which they bear is not due to their being the songs of those who returned from Babel (compare the somewhat similar expression in Ezra vii. 9), nor to their being festive pilgrim songs for the journey to Jerusalem ; nor is it derived from the fifteen steps which in the Temple led up to ‘the court of the women.’ Their designation must be due to some internal connexion of thought binding them together, and marking them out as in some sense ‘degrees,’ or steps leading upwards. It has been ingeniously pointed out that these steps consist in the reiteration of a word or thought occurring in one clause, verse, or stanza, which in the next verse or stanza is used, as it were, as

a *step* (or degree) by which to ascend to another and higher truth. Thus in our Psalm, the idea of ‘*my help*,’ expressed in ver. 1, is repeated in ver. 2. This has now become a step by which, in ver. 3, we reach the higher truth or explanation of ‘*my help*,’ as: ‘*He that keepeth thee will not slumber*,’ the same idea being with slight modification re-embodied in ver. 4. Another ‘degree’ is then reached in ver. 5, when ‘he who *slumbers* not’ is designated as *Jehovah*, the same idea being once more enlarged upon (the *word* occurring twice in ver. 5) in ver. 6. The last and highest degree of this song is attained in ver. 7, when the truth implied in the word *Jehovah* unfolds itself in its application to our *preservation*, which, with further enlargement, is once more repeated in ver. 8. *Perhaps* some internal connexion might even be traced between all the fifteen Psalms of Degrees. At any rate, it will not be difficult to trace the same structure in each of the Psalms ‘of Degrees,’ making allowance for occasional deviations and modifications.

Thus we can follow the spiritual outline of this Psalm, and see how its truths and promises are grouped around it. The *first* spiritual fact grasped directly by faith is ‘*my help*,’ the last presents its full unfolding, as: ‘*Jehovah shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore*.’ But who is ‘*my help*,’ or, as ver. 1 has been rendered, ‘Whence shall come my help?’ In reply, two facts are brought forward, as implied in this designation, viz., ‘*He that keepeth thee*,’ and this is truly *my help*; and again, ‘*He will not slumber*,’ and this is truly *my help*. But who is this Keeper of the spiritual Israel who slumbereth

not from weariness, and sleepeth not from necessity of nature, as human helpers do (these two ideas being conveyed in the original)? The soul joyously answers, It is *Jehovah*; and, rising to this height, realizes all that He now is, and all that He promises to be from henceforth and for ever, our chief want and delight being here summed up in the idea of *preservation*. As one of the Fathers remarks: 'The Lord will preserve their "going out," when those who go out of the body safely rest, separated from the ungodly by a great gulf. The Lord will preserve their "coming in," bringing them into that eternal and blessed kingdom.' Therefore, whether as to its distinctness of progression, or its wide sweep, this is a most precious Psalm, containing every needed promise for body and soul, for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. But in order to avail ourselves thereof we must be spiritually-minded. These, as indeed all, promises are given to faith and prayer: to faith, to possess them; to prayer, to realize them. The general tenor of this Psalm is to present the believer in the attitude of intense expectancy, and God as giving far beyond what he could ask, or even hope for. It contains only *two* verses of prayer, and *six* of promise; and while the prayer is couched in general terms, the promises are most definite and specific, and embrace every possible contingency. The points most clearly brought out in this supplication, or in the spiritual attitude heavenwards here assumed, are the unity and concentration of all hope in *Jehovah* as the covenant-God in Christ. On the one hand, it is as if one said, 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me;' or, 'To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of

eternal life.' On the other hand, it goes beyond this partly negative element, this despair of faith; for it breathes a certain and well-assured hope. But how full is the response in the promises, which, like a rich stream, pour forth their blessed waters from the throne of God and of the Lamb! Without doubt or hesitation, in the clearest terms, and in the firmest tones of unquestioned and absolute certainty, God is presented in His covenant relationship to His people, alike for safety, for care, and for comfort. I ask no more than the assurance of this Psalm for the deepest calm at all times, and for the most intense spiritual confidence and joy. And, blessed be God, I need no more than faith—the faith of a child and the prayer of a child—to call all these blessings mine. What richer morning-feast for our souls than to feed on this manna, and to drink these waters?

Truly, most wretched were our condition, if the Spirit of truth, convincing only of sin and misery, left us, with eyes opened, to gaze on the universal desolation and helplessness around. But there are hills above this valley of vision, and how beautiful on these mountains are the feet of Him who bringeth good tidings! And ever since we heard that voice, our eyes are lifted to the hills, from whence cometh our help. If He gave His Son for us, will He not with Him freely give us all things? Grace, redeeming grace, is the foundation and the pledge of every blessing. I cannot doubt His willingness; I dare not question the power of Him who 'made heaven and earth.' The stars in their courses fought against Sisera; the sun and moon decided the victory in favour of Joshua and Israel. All are His messengers, and do His

bidding. The question of a miracle often resolves itself into one of the time which its accomplishment occupies, or the partial view we may have of the tools which the heavenly Workman uses. He works with, or even without them, as it would *seem* to man, though not perhaps in reality, for He is the God of order. Only let me hold fast these two truths,—that *help cometh* from the Lord, and therefore let me pray; and that *my help cometh from the Lord*, and therefore let me believe.

And now, what does the Lord say in reply to my believing prayer, and that, mark, *before He sends deliverance*? He strengthens me inwardly with these assurances, which His blessed Spirit carries home to my heart. He tells me what He will *not* allow, and what He will *not* do (ver. 3). He will *not allow* my foot to be moved. I am safe against all assaults of the world and the devil, and under the felt weakness and instability of my own members. Enlarge the application of this as widely as you may, for time or for eternity. All that comes fairly within the scope of this or the following assurances is conveyed to me. Again, He *will not* slumber: a keeper, and an ever watchful keeper, anticipating every possible danger to body or soul; now giving charge to His angels, and then sending forth His own Spirit. And as if this were not enough, He points us to numberless instances of it in the past, as well as to the present experience of His people, at the same time appealing to His own character to prove the manifest impossibility of desertion or unfaithfulness. '*Behold*, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.' He next tells us, in so many words, *what He is*, in

His covenant relation: ‘The Lord *is* thy keeper’—*thy* keeper, not only Israel’s. In His administration of grace, both safety and comfort are combined: ‘The Lord *is thy shade* upon thy right hand.’ Day and night, joy and sorrow, health and sickness, life and death, have their terrors, and that oftentimes where least we should have expected them. But in every case we are equally safe (ver. 6). Best of all, there is spiritual security, and that not from the absence of evil, nor the reliableness of our will, but from the gracious and personal interposition of the Lord (ver. 7). Coming or going, travelling or staying, sowing or reaping, working or resting, doing or suffering, the Lord will still preserve thee, to the praise of His own power, and in virtue of His own sovereign love, from henceforth, ‘and *even for evermore.*’ Amen, so be it, Lord; and on this covenant I will place myself absolutely in Thy keeping.

1. An excellent travelling-song this, when I go abroad from home, or prepare for any work. Let me remember that there are not only difficulties which I cannot overcome, but perils which I can neither foresee nor avert. Above all, there are untold dangers to my soul. Let me hold fast by ver. 7. A sovereign comfort and remedy this. Let it be also a supreme guide and directory to me this day, and from this time forth, for evermore.

2. I require to remember that ‘my help cometh from the Lord,’ not only when seemingly there is no *outward* help from men or otherwise, but also and *especially* when all seems to go well with me,—when abundance of friends and help are at hand. For then, surely, am I most in danger of

making an arm of flesh my trust, and thus reaping its curse ; or of saying to my soul, 'Take thine ease,' and finding the destruction which attends such folly.

3. *By faith*, and ever by faith, my soul. Far, far rather would I owe preservation and deliverance to the *Lord* than to any or all of His creatures. I would choose, so long as I am on earth, faith rather than sight ; faith, because it binds me to my Lord, and keeps me ever dependent upon Him.

A SURE stronghold our God is He,
A trusty shield and weapon ;
Our Help He'll be, and set us free
From every ill can happen.
That old malicious foe
Intends us deadly woe ;
Arm'd with the strength of hell
And deepest craft as well,
On earth is not his fellow.

Through our own force we nothing can,
Straight were we lost for ever ;
But for us fights the proper Man,
By God sent to deliver.
Ask ye who this may be ?
Christ Jesus named is He,
Of Sabaoth the Lord ;
Sole God to be adored ;
'Tis He must win the battle.

LUTHER.
(*Lyra Germanica.*)

XLIX.

THE BROKEN SNARE.

- 1 If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say ;
- 2 If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against
us :
- 3 Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against
us :
- 4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul :
- 5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.
- 6 Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.
- 7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers :
The snare is broken, and we are escaped.
- 8 Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

PSALM CXXIV.

It is a precious thought that in these Psalms 'of Degrees' we have the guidance of the Holy Spirit Himself, who indited them, to help us in their spiritual understanding. Tracing the successive steps of ascent, we can kneel at each, and make each a spiritual resting-place. Thus the Lord opens to us the riches and the beauty of His precious Word, and enables us to go 'from strength unto strength.' The slight irregularity in the repetition of the *words* 'of degrees' in vers. 6, 8, is sufficiently explained by the outburst of thanksgiving called forth by the signal deliverance experienced. Besides, this seeming irregularity exists only so far as the *words* are

concerned ; the *idea* of ver. 5 being taken up in ver. 6, and that of ver. 7 in ver. 8.

Before the spiritual vision of the inspired singer, the dealings of God in grace unfold, and they carry to his heart, the sweet consolation of perfect assurance of safety. The song opens with a record of the fundamental fact in grace : '*Had it not been Jehovah who was on our side,*' which is repeated in ver. 2. What an *if* here, on which all depends ! 'Bless Jehovah, O my soul.' Had it been otherwise, '*then*'—ver. 3. What awful sequences are implied in the little word '*then*' in that connexion is further illustrated in ver. 4. This word '*then*' implied no less than spiritual destruction : '*the proud waters* had gone *over our souls*' (ver. 5). But it is only a hypothetical case, 'blessed be Jehovah' (ver. 6). We look back to mark the *greatness* of our deliverance and its completeness, for He 'hath not given us a prey to their teeth.' Accordingly, the next step or degree is : 'our soul is *escaped* out of the *snare*,' which is repeated with some enlargement of idea in the next clause (ver. 7). And so closes the Psalm with praise to our God and Father in Christ. Or, to sum up this outline in the words which mark the degrees : *If Jehovah had not been for us—then—waters had overwhelmed us*—(blessed be Jehovah!)—*escaped from the snare*—snare *broken* and we escaped (all help henceforth and for ever in the revelation in grace of Jehovah our Almighty Creator and ever present Redeemer) !

The subject of this song, therefore, is the gracious deliverance of the soul from the power of the enemy ; its translation from death to life, and from darkness into

light. It is remarkable with what intensity of feeling the soul ever reverts to spiritual deliverances. Religion is never felt to be so precious as when its reality has been put to the test. While frames and feelings give way, the power and grace of our God remain. Generally, the greatness of the danger is only seen when it is past. Mercifully a full view of it had been withheld, while we were in the midst thereof. So it is in the history of the individual, and in that of the Church. But when emerging on the other side of the sea, which has engulfed the hosts of Egypt, our rapturous song bursts forth, to the praise of Him who clave its waters. These truths constitute the burden of our thanksgiving: the extremity of our danger now past; our utter helplessness in meeting it in our own strength; the special interposing power of Jehovah; and the completeness of our safety. On these grounds, the soul now resolves to place itself, and that for ever, under the guardianship of God in Christ.

Most true it is, my soul, that if the Lord had not been on thy side, thou wouldest have been swallowed up, and that quickly, by the wrath of man and malice of devils. Between thee and utter despair, or entire failure, nothing interposed. What plea couldest thou have urged against the accuser, what answer given to the charges brought against thee, or what defence raised against assaults? But He that said, 'Fear not, little flock,' has made it good in thy experience, far beyond thy fears. Oh, jubilee! the Lord has been on thy side. One look of His gracious countenance, and thy guilty fears fled; one word of His mouth, and the storm was hushed into a calm; one motion of His hand, and the enemies were

dispersed. When we thought not of Him, *He* remembered us; when we sought Him not, He came to us; and when we cried for Him, He made haste to help. After this, surely, we can never despair. If at first it was *guilt*, now it is sin which threatens to 'overwhelm' us, and to 'go over our soul.' But from both dangers we are now completely safe and free. Truly these two things are most marvellous to us—how that from which we might naturally have expected help failed; and how He who was unseen proved nigh, even at our side. What thanksgiving, then, becomes us to Him who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver! If but one such instance were on record, it would prove a door of hope in the valley of Achor. But consider that the whole history of God's covenant people, from first to last, is a history of *God's dealings*, and that all these dealings are in the way of deliverance. From Adam, the first sinner, to Paul, the injurious blasphemer, God has showed mercy, 'for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.' 'If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may *Israel* say' (the *whole* Israel of God). We greatly mistake the purport of Scripture history and sacred biography, when we read it as the record of men's lives, instead of that of God's manifestations. Why should I seek to vindicate Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, or Peter? They were but men, compassed with the same infirmities as we are. These histories are so glorious and so precious—not because they relate what is past, nor merely for the promises which they contain, but because they are the record of God's dealings, and the revelation of His character. They show

us not only what He has done, but what He is—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been almost overwhelmed by the waters, ‘the Lord is known by the deliverance which He has wrought. Higgsaion, Selah.’ And now ‘the snare is broken;’ the prey is taken from the mighty, and gladsome our soul has escaped to the shelter of His wings. However cunningly the snare had been laid, and however helpless the bird seemed in the hands of the fowler, greater is He that is for us than all that can be against us. My joy can know no bounds, when I realize my complete and perfect salvation through Christ, and my entire and absolute safety in God. Blessed, and ever blessed be the Lord, who hath not dealt with us according to our deserts, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. ‘We walk at large, and praise the hand to which we freedom owe.’

But let me endeavour to understand still more fully the precious import of the fact, ‘Our soul *is* escaped.’ Surely this refers to my full acceptance in Christ, and to my standing in the covenant of grace; not merely to the past, but also to the present and to the future. To the praise of His redeeming love, I am not only pardoned, but accepted; not merely allowed entrance, but have a dwelling-place; not only justified, but for ever sanctified. The snare no longer exists for me; it is broken. *I stand*; not indeed in mine own strength, but ‘our help’ (our *real*, not merely our anticipated and hoped-for help) ‘is in the name of Jehovah.’ The awakened soul alone knows with what dread sin is contemplated, and its indwelling power apprehended. But let me also

realize the liberty wherewith Christ *has* made me free. Why should I be either cast down or discouraged? The snare *is* broken; we *are* escaped; and our help *is* in the name of the Lord. Out of myself, then, and to Him, with my newly acquired freedom—like a bird, winging its way upward! Once more, then, by faith and prayer, followers of them ‘who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens;’ followers also of them ‘who through faith and patience *inherit* the promises.’ Day by day, while I live, and work, and strive, and pray, I will say to myself, ‘Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.’ And oh, what a song will this be for the Israel of God, when the number of the elect is completed, and a second time the Redeemer shall come to Zion, ‘without sin, unto salvation!’ What an exact record this of the experience of the Church in all ages, and against all enemies, temporal and spiritual!

1. These three things will I bear on my heart, O Lord: ‘The Lord *was* on our side,’ this for the *past*; ‘The snare *is* broken,’ for the *present*; ‘Our help is in the name of the Lord,’ this for the *future*. I will not and I can not be faint-hearted, whether in my contest with Satan, in my intercourse with the world, or in the upheavings of my wicked heart, so long as I hold this ‘threefold cord’ in my hand, or rather, am held by it.

2. What deliverances have *I* to record before the Lord?

Let me review my past history, let me survey my present position, let me look forwards and upwards. Nothing but grace meets me everywhere ; and wherever I be, Thou art still on my side, near me ; the snare is broken, Christ died, and rose again. Our help is in His name. Only let me cry, and He is at hand.

3. I cannot fail, I cannot fall. O grace, grace, grace—precious, free, sovereign, undeserved grace, to me, the vilest of sinners—what a debtor am I to thee, and what an almighty Helper art Thou, O Lord, to me !

THE winds were howling o'er the deep,
Each wave a watery hill ;
The Saviour waken'd from His sleep ;
He spake, and all was still.

He call'd me in the time of dread,
When death was full in view ;
I trembled on my feverish bed,
And rose to sin anew.

Yet, could I hear Him once again,
As I have heard of old,
Methinks He should not call in vain
His wanderer to the fold.

O Thou ! that every thought canst know,
And answer every prayer,
O give me sickness, want, or woe ;
But snatch me from despair !

My struggling will by grace control !
Renew my broken vow !
What blessed light breaks on my soul ?
My God ! I hear Thee now !

BISHOP HEBER.

L.

SPIRITUAL SUCCESS.

- 1 EXCEPT the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it :
Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.
- 2 It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows :
For so he giveth his beloved sleep.
- 3 Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord : and the fruit of the womb is his reward.
- 4 As arrows are in the hands of a mighty man ; so are children of the youth.
- 5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them :
They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.—PSALM CXXVII.

ALL who are exercised to discern spiritual realities have made frequent experience that those passages of Scripture which are clothed in symbolical language often contain the fullest and richest instruction. They seem designedly to have been couched in figures of the widest application, and, with the truths which they directly convey, to carry promises of higher and deeper realities. Thus, this Psalm of Degrees mounts so high, that even the view of the Fathers, who understood the sleep granted to His beloved as referring to the

rest preceding the resurrection, seems warranted. Whithersoever we can carry this Psalm, let us to the full enjoy its consolations ; for God gave it not to me only, nor to thee ; not to Solomon, nor to the Jews only, but to the Church in all ages, and to the believer, under every circumstance of living, of suffering, of working, of hoping, and of trusting.

If, as the inscription bears, the Psalm was written by Solomon, it may have had its primary application to the building of the temple, and to the reign of safety and of peace which made him so eminent a type of the Prince of Peace. In that case it would point directly forward to the building of the Church of God ; to every work undertaken in His name, and for the advancement of His glory ; and to the safety, the peace, and the privileges of all who, as His beloved, rest under the shadow of Christ's wings. Thus it were a song on the text, Prov. x. 22 : 'The blessing of Jehovah maketh rich, and troublous labour addeth nothing to it,'—a sentence which, both in its positive and negative bearing, ought ever to be present to our minds. The steps or degrees in this Psalm, though distinctly marked, are not so regular as in some of the others. The twice repeated '*in vain*' of verse 1 may be regarded as the motto or step for verse 2. The correspondence between the two clauses in ver. 1 is also very striking. It is as if, on entering upon some spiritual undertaking, or even in referring to the present state of matters, he emphatically disclaimed as *vain* every other interposition or help than that of Jehovah. And of this '*in vain*,' it is well constantly to remind ourselves, especially in

seasons of activity or of peace. For then are we most apt to fall into the snare of this *vanity*. The next 'degree' is that of success and prosperity, '*sons*' (vers. 3, 4), which is ascribed to the same Jehovah whose help and protection constituted the commencement and continuance, as now the completion of our wellbeing. Hence also ver. 5 goes not beyond this, but contemplates the highest symbol of full security, influence, and power, in the figurative language of the Old Testament, which St. Augustine explains as of 'spiritual children, shot forth like arrows into all the world.'

A modern writer aptly sums up the primary meaning of the Psalm as follows: 'The building of the house which gives us shelter; the continuance of the city in which we peacefully and securely dwell; the procuring of those means by which we sustain and enjoy life; the obtaining and upbringing of children, which form the comfort and support of the aged parent—all depend on the blessing of God. No earthly measures can obtain them; prudent provision cannot secure them; anxious labour cannot insure them; impatient cares and murmuring cannot constrain them.' Of this, indeed, have we ample and daily proof, though here perhaps, more than in any other case, assent to the truth of God's word leaves still the other and main element of being among His 'beloved' unprovided. There is an *heritage* which is his *reward*, and a labour the fruit of which He giveth to His people, while sleeping, without any exertion of their own, when they wholly resign all their own attempts, and in conscious helplessness calmly resign themselves unto Him. And this truth our faith embraces, that *real* strength, happiness,

and security—victory, even in the opinion of the world (ver. 5)—come not from our working, but from what He has done and doeth, and are obtained by simple, childlike trust, which calmly resteth in Him.

Thus has this Psalm many and varied applications. It is a delightful song for a minister of the gospel, a good motto or life-word for the head of a house, and, in general, an excellent cordial for those who may begin or carry on any work for Christ. There is also a passage in it most suited for the night-time, whether of body or of soul: 'So He giveth His beloved sleep.' A precious lullaby for the fevered frame, restlessly tossing, and an unspeakably sweet consolation for the troubled heart. To pillow one's-self on His breast, and to wait for the sleep and refreshment *He* giveth,—holding in the meanwhile heart-converse with Him,—is soothing medicine indeed for body and soul. But, above all, it is the felt weakness, expressed in the opening verses, which, in its spiritual application to Christ, forms our strength and constitutes our comfort. For, truly, what is the worm Jacob to thresh these mountains? But there is such holy boldness, such undismayed valour, and such calm certainty of victory, when, in the felt sense of my inability, I am cast upon the Lord, urging with Him that all this work and undertaking is and must be entirely His own, as will infallibly sustain and bring to triumph the weakest of men. For here it cannot be a question of difficulties arising in the course of my work, or of discouragement springing up to paralyse my efforts. All these,—nay, the sum of all,—difficulties and discouragements I have had *in me* and *with me* before I began; and I begin

by casting them all upon the Lord. I am not left to find out how heavy the stones are, as I try to lift them one by one ; or how many the enemies, as I go round my watch ; or how arduous and incessant the toil, as it repeats itself from sunrise to night : but I have seen it all, and much more, in advance, and I have provided for it by casting all upon the Lord. Now I only feel the blessedness of *His* building, keeping, and working, while I take sweet rest in the Lord my Maker. Surely 'children are an heritage of the Lord.' May the Lord build us such an house !

1. O my soul, this is thy very strength, that thou art weak. Now hold fast by thy Saviour and Lord, who hath loved thee, and bought thee with His precious blood. Let me delight in confessing to Christ my weaknesses, doubts, and difficulties, since He is able and willing to save unto the uttermost. Let me be detailed in my complaint. It is not one, nor many, but *all* my burdens which I must roll over upon Him. What are they now ?—and oh, give me grace not to seek to bear any of them myself.

2. O Lord, this work which I undertake to-day, this duty which devolves upon me, is Thy work. Let me connect all with Christ, by connecting it with His glory, by doing it in His Spirit. Let me make Him my companion, by making myself His companion. O Lord, do Thou it for me, for Thine own name's sake. The house I have to build, the city I have to keep, the work I have to do—let me now lay it all fully before the Lord. Each stone, each round of my watch, each hour of my labour,—each living stone, every act of watchfulness, every labour of love,—all *by* the Lord, and *in*

the Lord, and *with* the Lord. And now let me plead all this with Thee, and believably look up.

3. I build under the eye of the Master, within His hearing, within reach of His arm. What strength, joy, and consolation in that thought ; and oh, what a living spring of prayer !

O WHAT the blessedness, dwelling alone,
Filled with the peace to the worldly unknown,
As in a mirror the Bridegroom to see,
Fearing no peril, nor toil that can be !

Woe is me ! What is existence below ?
Trouble on trouble, and blow upon blow !
What is in this world save sorrowful years,
Much tribulation and plentiful tears ?

Grant Thou Thy patience, O Jesu, to me !
Grant Thou Thy graces, my safeguard to be !
So that in all things Thy will may be mine,
Bearing all troubles, because they are Thine.

Still let me study like Thee to appear,—
Still let me seek to be crucified here :
That, if my anguish, like Thine, is increased,
I may sit also with Thee at Thy feast.

Low before Him with our praises we fall,
Of Whom, and *through* Whom, and *in* Whom are all :
Of Whom—the Father, and *in* Whom—the Son,
Through Whom—the Spirit, with these ever One. Amen.

HYMN OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.
(*Neal's Mediæval Hymns and Sequences.*)

LI.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

- 1 BEHOLD, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity !
- 2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head,
That ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard ;
That went down to the skirts of his garments ;
- 3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion :
For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

PSALM CXXXIII.

AMONG the blessings for which the believer most longeth in the present dispensation is the unity of the Church. That those who are alike 'strangers and pilgrims' here, who love and serve and follow the same Lord, and who hope to spend eternity together, should be so far separated in circumstances under which they should be closely united, is indeed most distressing. It almost seems as if this were one of the mysteries for the solution of which we had to wait till we are 'behind the veil.' Into the *causes* of this separation we may not enter. We are all too prone to behold the mote in our brother's eye, but to neglect the beam in our own eye. By sectarianism we too often mean *another* man's attachment to his special

opinions. Yet he is sectarian who sees and follows only sects; who sees churches but fails to see *the Church*. 'Is Christ divided?' And if Christ is not, neither is His Church divided. We all know and see in part, and herein lie our divisions; we all know and see Christ, and herein lies our union. While we should all and always aim after and promote union, just as we should aim after, and seek the coming of His kingdom, it seems as if this belonged to the Church of the future rather than of the present. Unity is not uniformity. The latter, in order to be true, implies perfectness; the former, the same origin, the same life, and the same consummation. Unity does not necessarily lead to uniformity. Life is multi-form, yet one. Resemblance, not identity, are the characteristics even of closest family-relationship. '*Till* we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.' That '*till*' has not yet arrived, nor will it arrive before we come 'unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.'

Like every attempt to externalize that which is spiritual and perceived only by faith, the attempt to bring about a merely outward unity has been to many 'a delusion and a snare.' We recognise a much higher and wider union, which binds all Christ's people into one. It is union of allegiance, of experience, and of profession. 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism.' Not that we think lightly of any scriptural attempts to promote Christian union. Only, as in reference to Christian peace, the best and safest way to attain it is simply to seek Christ who giveth peace, so in reference to Christian union. The closer we keep to *Christ*, the more

fully we realize the spiritual doctrines of His kingdom, the nearer are we to union with all the brethren. The question, Are we warranted in going apart? once answered, it is far safer to listen to the voice of conscience, than to follow the dictates of carnal policy. The points on which we are to decide must be determined *solely by the Word of God*. They concern the truth of God, the honour of Christ, and the spiritual wellbeing of our souls. And here no compromise is either safe or lawful. Yet that is a very narrow heart which sees Christ only in one community. Our Sun of Righteousness lights up a whole hemisphere; some more and some less, according to their relative position to the Sun.

Yet is all proper, outward unity none the less to be desired and sought after, that in its fulness it is matter of faith rather than of sight. We *are* one with all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and in truth. Inward sincerity and outward truth are the bonds which connect us. We *believe* in the Holy Catholic Church, we see it not, and this invisible Church, which is perfect, entrances and holds our hearts much more firmly than any outward unity of man's devising. Yet is it to be remarked that most grounds of our separation depend upon points which cannot possibly apply to another and a better state. There is room for difference of opinion as to the manner in which we can best carry out the will and mind of our common Master, and advance His kingdom. Yet in purpose are we at one. And it is the mark of a carnal mind to know no other union than that which is outwardly perceptible, or to forbid them because they follow not with us.

In this prayer and song of the unity of the Church, it is noteworthy how, commencing with the fundamental idea of *brethren*, we rise to the realization of the Elder Brother, who is our common anointed High Priest. It is the bond of His Priesthood which joins us together as brethren. It is the common anointing which flows down even to the skirts of the garment of our High Priest which marks our being brethren. Whether we dwell north or south, meeting in Zion, and sharing in the blessings of that eternal Priesthood of Christ, we form in reality, and before our Father, but one family—‘the whole family in earth and heaven.’ Our real bond of union consists in the ‘flowing down,’ the ‘running down’ or ‘descending’ of the common blessing, which marks the step in this Psalm of Degrees (vers. 2, 3). And if ‘the dew of Hermon’ has descended upon ‘the mountains of Zion,’ long after the sun has risen shall gladsome fruit appear—in some twenty, in some thirty, and in some a hundred-fold.

Therefore let us remember these *main* points, and rejoice in them. ‘The love of the brethren’—how good and how precious it is! We are so prone to magnify our little differences, and to diminish our great agreement, that, from love to the churches, we forget to love the Church. All these sectarian prejudices and dislikes spring from self and self-seeking. After all, we are all agreed on the main points,—on every main point,—‘One Lord, one faith, one baptism.’ In cherishing our separate and distinctive convictions on what are, at best, very secondary points, let us remember that God has allowed this diversity that, each in our own way—whether as churches or as individuals—we may do our

own work for Christ, 'till we all come into the unity of the faith.' In measure as we are sectarian, we are not Christian. I may love my own church very much, but I love Christ and His Church—the Church—still better. The great point is to be one of the 'brethren.' God our Father, Christ our Elder Brother, heaven our home. The love of the brethren is as sweet and precious, its odour as fragrant, before God and man, as Aaron's ointment; as refreshing and fertilizing as the dew of Hermon and of the mountains of Zion, on summer's eve or at early morn. But, oh, the heart ever points back to Zion herself,—the mother of us all, the city of the great King, where the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore. That is the bond, and the only true bond, for 'the brethren,'—'holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.' God commands everlasting life, with all that is needful to impart and sustain it, from Zion for all 'the brethren.' 'They dwell together;' and, if conscious of it, surely it must be 'in unity.'

1. What are my feelings towards 'the brethren,' high or low, rich or poor, attractive or repulsive? Let me study James ii. 1-16, as a much-needed warning in connexion with this matter. Do I really sympathize with every true Christian effort, no matter what name it bears? Surely, if I love Jesus, for whom and in whose name these things are done, I must do so. After all, then, love to the brethren resolves itself into love to the 'Elder Brother.' But oh, my soul, how difficult even to love Jesus, without bringing self into it!

2. Let me love my own Church, and hold firm what convictions I have, or think I have, scripturally received. But

how many of these points will hold good in or apply to heaven? Are they not all, or almost all, connected with our earthly organization, or else with the attempt to reconcile and harmonize 'things which are too high' for us? Nay, even were it otherwise, let me remember how John companied with Peter after that Friday, and the eleven with Thomas during that week of unbelief; above all, how Jesus bears with each of us. 'To *bear* one another's burdens,'—not to pass by the burdened ones, nor to reproach them, far less to throw fresh burdens upon them! Let my love be without weakness, without sentimentalism, without compromise, without sectarianism, without hypocrisy, without man-seeking, without dissimulation. Least of all let it be merely in words. Let it flow, as it were, through Jesus to the brethren—from the head of our Aaron to the skirts of His garments.

3. How can I manifest my love to Jesus and the 'brethren' *to-day*? They are my own flesh and blood. How can I nourish and cherish them to-day? Can I do anything to-day, by prayer, effort, or example, to heal the breaches of Zion? Am I in the habit of evil-speaking, evil-thinking, or evil-feeling? Oh, that unruly member, the tongue! Am I a 'peace-haver, peace-bringer, peace-maker?'

4. Blessed Jesus, O that I had more love to Thee! Are they not *my* brethren—equally lost, sought, and saved? *Thy* brethren—heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Thee? I must pray more for Zion, and work more for Zion, and love Zion better, for it is Thy Zion; and I am not mine own, but Thine. O for more dew on the mountains of Zion, and for more life in mine own heart!

LII.

ZION RESTORED.

- 1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down ; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion !
- 2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.
- 3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song ;
And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
- 4 How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land ?
- 5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.
- 6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth ;
If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.
- 7 Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem ;
Who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.
- 8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed ;
Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.
- 9 Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

PSALM CXXXVII.

THIS is a song of spiritual 'home-sickness,' the burden of which is the love of Zion : not of *our* Zion—as sometimes, by a strange mis-application, a particular branch of the Church is called—but of *Zion*. For Zion is neither mine nor thine ; 'but Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of *us all*.' There is only one Zion to which we owe undivided allegiance, next to and because of the

Lord, 'of whom the *whole family* in heaven and earth is named.' Here are the characteristics of its citizens: Family adoption, family nearness, family likeness, family privileges, family union, and family inheritance. 'There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.' This Zion is the object of our most intense affection, for 'this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever.' Moreover—with holy reverence be it said—in virtue of His identification with the Church, whatever affects Zion affecteth its King; 'for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.' Again, the inmost recesses and the deepest springs of our hearts are identified with it. 'All my springs are in Thee.' So affectingly true is this, that 'if I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning' (ver. 5). All my doing and my life is connected with it; nor would I lift my right hand with strength or with cunning, were its connexion with Zion severed. 'If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth' (ver. 6). I have nothing more to say, far less to sing; 'if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy,' then, let my heart cease to beat, for its life-blood no longer circulates through it. Accordingly, in all her afflictions we are afflicted. They concern us most personally. If we sit down 'by the rivers of Babylon,' we weep 'when we remember Zion.' No event comes with a feeling of more bitter desolation and loneliness over the heart of the child of God, than sitting by the rivers of Babylon—finding one's-self on strange soil, in uncongenial company. To be 'in the midst thereof' (ver. 2)—either so far as society or the

ministry is concerned—is and should be cause for mourning, though not for murmuring. Look upwards, not downwards. Even in our ordinary business avocations, the heart of a child of Zion feels as ‘in a strange land’—not there, but at home. ‘I have set *my affection* to the house of my God’ (see also Col. iii. 1-4). We have, indeed, still ‘our harps,’ but they are *Zion’s* harps, and ‘we hanged’ them ‘upon the willows;’ we are ready to sing, but not to sing there. Spiritual joy cannot co-exist with worldly fellowship, nor with the indulgence of *any* sin—of thought, or of tongue, or of deed. And yet the world cannot understand why we should not be able to hold our religion in the midst of its atmosphere. ‘They that carried us away captive *required* of us a song;’ or rather, as it should be rendered, ‘*the words* of a song.’ They see no inconsistency in a religion which freely mixes with the world. In their ignorance, they only require ‘*the words* of a song;’ its heavenly strain they have never caught. ‘They that *wasted us* required of us mirth.’ Remember, it is this worldly element which wasteth, or lays on heaps, whether so far as our own hearts or the Church of God is concerned. But, true to his spiritual instincts, the child of God replies, ‘How shall we sing *Jehovah’s* song in the land of a *stranger*?’ (ver. 4); and then, so far from being utterly cast down or overcome, rises with fresh outburst of resolution and intenseness of new vigour, to utter the vows of vers. 5 and 6. For, after having passed through such a spiritual conflict, we come forth, not wearied but refreshed, not weaker, but stronger. It is one of the seeming contradictions of the gospel, that the cure of weariness, and the

relief of heavy-ladenness, lies in this—to *take the cross upon ourselves*. After the night-long conflict of Israel, ‘as he passed over Peniel, *the sun rose upon him*,’ and that though ‘he halted upon his thigh.’

But while this experience holds good at all times, there are seasons to which it is specially applicable. Such was the case when Israel was carried ‘beyond the river’—at least so far as regarded the believing hearts, the singers of Zion, among them. Such is it still, in a spiritual sense, to Israel. Here, then, we have the true representation of *Judæa capta*, full of the most intense pathos; and we seem to hear the sighing of a wind which moves all the trees of the field, even ‘the willows,’ on which, by the water-courses of Babylon, Zion’s harps are hanged. Again, one might well conceive that, of all others, this was the Psalm most suitable for John and his companions on the Friday of the crucifixion, as they returned from Calvary, to be oft repeated during the days of the entombment. It is also the song of the widowed Church, and of the Church in the wilderness; and it will become so with increasing appropriateness during the troubles of the last days. And what a glorious wakening of the new morning, when Israel shall finally take it up *audibly*, in the hearing of all nations! Surely ‘the night cometh, and also the morning.’ There is a ‘day of Jerusalem’ (ver. 7) in the bright future as well as in the dark past, and ‘the daughter of Babylon’ (her legitimate daughter, even in a literal sense) *is* ‘to be destroyed.’ The bounds are set—hitherto, and no farther; and when the vial is full, it shall pour forth His wrath, even ‘of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.’ Nor

is there any personal vindictiveness in these predictions, however fearful the judgments which they announce (vers. 8, 9); for, in fact, there is nothing of a *personal* or individual character in them. It was not as individuals that we suffered; *Zion* was 'rased;' and if they could have *done* what they '*said*,' it would have been 'even to the foundation thereof' (ver. 7). 'Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure,' in the case of individual believers, of the Church of God, and of His precious truth. Nor, on the other hand, are *we*, in our individual capacity, now vindicated, but *Zion*. Therefore, 'Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets.' 'And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia: Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: *for true and righteous are His judgments.*'

1. *Identified with Christ, with His cause and people*—is that my case? How painfully does it ever come back upon us, in our weary disappointments with the world, and even in some measure, with the Church: '*They all seek their own!*' Do I, then, only seek 'the things which are Jesus Christ's?' Am I quite identified with Him, so that what affects Him or His cause affects me? Am I not looking to anything that is my own, but to the things that are His? Do I prefer Christ's Church to my church, the Vine to the branch? I am tempted to say, 'All men are liars.' When I see how concern for their worldly good, or a desire for anything of this world—be it not its money, but the favour, and influence, or good opinion of men—sways, or keeps, or influences them, I am prone to feel myself alone and sad—to hang up my harp on

the willow, and to weep. 'When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.' I may, perhaps, even be tempted to feel like Elijah in the wilderness, by the mount of God, or like Jonah under his withered gourd. 'This is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High ; I will remember the works of the Lord.' This is 'my haste ;' but I will go 'into the sanctuary of God.' If all men be liars, all the more let me be true. Besides, I am not my brother's judge or keeper. I know not his case, far less his temptations or difficulties. And the Lord is able to deliver him. Therefore let me be zealous, but only for God ; jealous, but only over myself.

2. This is a very solemn and *testing* Psalm for ministers of the gospel, and for all workers in His vineyard, however employed. The question brought to issue is that of our *feelings* towards His cause and work, which is 'honourable and glorious.' Do 'I prefer' 'Jerusalem above my chief joy?' Am I unconcerned about my own name, honour, advantage, and party, so that His cause prosper ; content to be nothing and to have nothing ; to prove merely as the instrument in His hand, and do I rejoice if the gospel is preached, were it even 'of envy and strife?' A servant of Christ is wholly absorbed in His work, and has neither time, leisure, nor heart to think of anything else. And have we not all *a* work for Him? Let me, then, seek it out and follow it, this day and evermore, humbly but believingly.

3. *Beware*, O my soul, of the dangerous confusion of Church and world, of light and darkness, of truth and error. I cannot breathe a poisoned atmosphere ; I cannot sing the Lord's song in a strange land. *Keep* thyself ever fresh

and warm by thoughts of Zion. *Wait* for the deliverance of the Lord, and prayerfully *look upwards*. *Rest assured* that the time, 'the set time,' shall come—the new 'day of Jerusalem,' which, at the same time, will be that when 'the daughter of Babylon' is 'to be destroyed.' 'Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly!'

JERUSALEM the golden,
 With milk and honey blest,
 Beneath thy contemplation
 Sink heart and voice oppressed :
 I know not, oh, I know not,
 What social joys are there ;
 What radiancy of glory,
 What light beyond compare !
 They stand, those halls of Syon,
 Conjubilant with song,
 And bright with many an angel
 And all the martyr throng :
 The Prince is ever in them ;
 The daylight is serene ;
 The pastures of the blessed
 Are decked in glorious sheen.
 There is the Throne of David ;
 And there, from care released,
 The song of them that triumph,
 The shout of them that feast ;
 And they who, with their Leader,
 Have conquered in the fight,
 For ever and for ever
 Are clad in robes of white !

RHYTHM OF S. BERNARD.

17 MH66



